



新加坡之行有感

黃慧德老師

同樣是彈丸之地，同樣是華人為主的社會，同樣有重視經濟發展及人才培訓的觀念。今次交流，竟令我這麼驚覺新、港兩地的文化差異，是如此巨大。

有時，自以為是的香港人，的確需要多些往外地走走，放低一套「大香港價值觀」，嘗試易地而處，進入別人的角度，多元地思考。否則，永遠抱著一種成見看事物，只會固步自封，被自建的圍牆堵著。

世事千變萬化，時代的巨輪不停地轉，在一時一地被認為是歪的、是壞的，在另一時空，卻可能有它們存在的價值。



新加坡教育觀摩團

鄭鍾榮老師

在四天緊密的行程中，透過參觀四所各具特色的中學和與當地師生的交談，令我初步認識到新加坡的教育概況。觀察所見，新加坡的資訊科技硬件設備比香港優勝，但應用的普及性方面則與香港的情況相若，只要同工們繼續努力，香港的資訊科技教育定可追上世界水平，不會落後於新加坡。



新加坡教育觀摩團 – 個人感想

關榮基老師

一連四天的新加坡教育考察團令我眼界大開。這是我第一次踏足這個名聞遐邇的國度，心情只能以“興奮”兩字來形容。心目中的新加坡是一個沒有自由的國家，人民的生活處處受到政府的管束，印象最深刻的莫過於其清潔措施，市民不准亂拋垃圾、不可吃香口膠、不可……總之是一個欠缺自由氣息的地方。但我終於改變了一些看法，新加坡市民並不感到政府是強蠻的，因為種種措施也是從市民的利益出發，一個清潔的地方誰人不想？另外，新加坡的完善教育制度也令我感受良多，雖然政府採取了精英教育政策，但並沒有忽略發展全人教育，特別是在資訊科技及語文教學的成果，更是有目共睹的。



A Tiring but Fruitful Trip

Ms Belinda Lam

The trip was over but it has not come to an end. The follow-up work is approaching

Though the four secondary schools we visited are different in many aspects, I did find they are quite similar in a sense – the enthusiasm of the key personnel, the incorporation of thinking skills in the curriculum, the leadership of prefects, the huge school campus

The prefects, especially those in the last school, impressed me a lot. They are well trained and experienced in welcoming guests. While touring the school with us, they were willing and able to answer questions in detail and were interested in getting to know more about Hong Kong. They even offered us a lesson observation (not planned in advance) and immediately asked for permission of the teacher. To me, they behaved like university students who had reached the age of discretion and could make quick decisions. In fact, they are just Secondary four students.

I wonder if it is related to the incorporation of thinking skills in the curriculum. The implementation is well-planned and designed. The skills have been taught in an explicit manner and made a compulsory subject in the lower forms, and in fact, since primary school. They are also taught in a systematic and organized way. The teachers are trained to teach and also given a detailed teacher manual to ensure that the students are well-developed. It is the goal of the schools that students can be creative, become independent decision makers and political leaders. In comparison, our students are exam-orientated and are mostly trained in exam skills. They learn by rote and may get good results. However, they are weak in problem-solving and reaching a decision. It is worth asking if our students are also in need of such training.

The trip is of great benefit to me. I could have learnt more if there had been more exchanges with the teachers there. The trip was over but it brought to me endless thoughts.



Singapore Experience

Mr. Hung Tak-ming

All the way, my fellow associates of the four Association schools acquitted themselves in a respectable and respectful manner. They did not bring back anything appreciable in monetary terms, but witnessed in themselves such qualities as being humorous, dedicated, responsible and professional. These qualities, I presume, are the alternative measure of the programme's success.



A Rush but Precious Study Trip

Ms Wong Yin Shan Kristina

No boredom

That was my third time to Singapore but I didn't feel bored.

A good impression

I had been to four secondary schools in that four-day trip. There were several things that really impressed me. First of all, it is the school campus. I've never dreamed they are so spacious with a lot of facilities provided. Maybe it is one of the reasons that create a good learning atmosphere in Singapore. Besides, students have comparatively high motivation for acquiring knowledge. Perhaps their value on education is one of the main reasons. Moreover, it seems that students, in general, are very self-disciplined. Teachers need not care much about the disciplinary problems during the lessons. 'Oh! I'm a bit envious.'

A different curriculum

(1) To help students develop creative thinking and speak standard English, there are two elements involved in curriculum planning, namely, thinking skills and public speaking.

a/ Thinking skills

They are taught explicitly in lower secondary and implicitly in upper secondary classes. And the teachers have to incorporate these skills into the scheme of work, in particular, for various key subjects. As we all know, creative thinking plays an important role in the learning process. Students in Hong Kong have long been blamed for having no or low creativeness. It is time for us to review our curriculum. It is no doubt that many teachers have already incorporated such skills in their subjects unconsciously. However, it is not a must to do so. Many students may have no chances to pick up these skills. Being a language teacher, I find that it is crucial for learners to help students pick up reading as well as writing skills. You know, a good writer needs creativeness.

b/ Public Speaking

Like thinking skills, it is incorporated into subjects to ensure that students speak to the public confidently. Students have to give an oral presentation during lessons. It is a part of continuous assessment. As for English, some experts or NETs are recruited to help develop a Standard English accent. I also like to ask students to give an oral presentation in class. I strongly agree that it is a good way to boost students' speaking skills. A good command of spoken English and mastery of presentation techniques can, undoubtedly, help students in their life-long learning.

(2) Genre-based Grammar Approach

There is a big change in the English syllabus. I think it is good. It switched from communicative approach to genre-based approach (more grammar text-typed elements have

to be taught). I talked to some Sec 4 students. They all claimed that it was good as it could help them build up their foundation (When will our approach be changed?)

Less Worried

Before the trip, I felt a bit worried about using IT in language teaching. It is undeniably it can add value to teaching and learning. It is one of the useful ways of teaching English. Being English teachers, we can't teach English for the sake of using IT. I had talked to two heads of the English Department. They both admitted that teaching English is different from other science subjects in which it may be suitable to use IT elements in every lesson. We can use it when appropriate. Again, we can make use of some resources like CD-Rom or software from publishers as students' self-learning aids. It gave me an insight when designing the tasks for students. Is it worth spending too much time on making a power point presentation if its effectiveness is no different from using handouts or overhead projectors?

No more complaint

Having known the workload of the majority of Singaporean English teachers, I dare not complain any more. Many English teachers in Singapore have to teach 2 or 3 full classes of English together with a few lessons of other subjects. What is more, all English teachers have to take compulsory grammar-teaching courses after school since the beginning of this school year (Their working hour at school mostly is from 7 am to 6 pm). We can see how heavy their workload is.

Expectation

I do hope that there will be some teachers' training courses or seminars about thinking skills for teachers. Many teachers are willing to incorporate these skills into the scheme of work if resources are provided and techniques are taught.

Study Trip

Thanks for organizing this study trip for us. It is a successful trip. It would have been more successful if we had visited, perhaps, three schools, in four days. The schedule was a bit tight indeed. You know, tiredness can affect one's concentration.