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A New Emphasis for a New Millennium: Affective and Career Education in Singapore

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The 21st century will require individuals to cope with rapid change in many arenas of life. Along with the teaching of the traditional knowledge base, Asian educators need to help students learn how to manage change and the stress it can bring. The development of pupils' "emotional intelligence" in addition to traditional cognitive skills will be an important factor in producing adaptable, successful, and productive citizens. In Singapore, a programme aimed at developing pupils' personal and social skills was established in the late 1980's and has recently evolved into "Affective and Career Education" with an emphasis on the teaching of life skills. This paper will briefly trace the history of Singapore's personal and social education programme (called Pastoral Care and Career Guidance) and detail the components and rationale for the new initiative called "Affective and Career Education."

Introduction

The 21st century will require individuals to cope with rapid change in many arenas of life. Along with the teaching of the traditional knowledge base, Asian educators need to help students learn how to manage change and the stress it can bring. Schooling the heart, will be regarded as key alongside schooling the intellect (Goleman, 1995). The development of pupils' "emotional intelligence" in addition to traditional cognitive skills

will be an important factor in producing adaptable, successful, and productive citizens.

The all-round development of an individual is the focus of the Singapore Ministry of Education's (MOE) recent publication of *The Desired Outcomes of Education* (1998) which states that the role of a national education system has two functions: "to develop the individual, and to educate the citizen." In publishing the desired outcomes of education, the MOE is stating the attributes that are desired of every Singaporean. These attributes include being morally upright; culturally rooted yet understanding and respecting differences; and being responsible to family, community and country. Another outcome articulated was the desire that our pupils demonstrate a belief in the principles of meritocracy, and contribute towards building a gracious society. We want pupils who are willing to strive, take pride in their work, and value working with others. The ability to think, reason and deal confidently with the future, with courage and conviction, especially when facing adversity is another desired outcome of education. Individuals, who are able to seek, process and apply knowledge, as well as be innovative, with a spirit of continual improvement, a lifelong habit of learning and an enterprising disposition, are desired. The final desired outcome outlined by the MOE for our pupils is to "think global, but remain rooted to Singapore." The traditional cognitive knowledge base will no longer be sufficient to ensure these desired educational outcomes despite the fact that it currently serves our pupils well as borne out in the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), where Singaporean pupils ranked first among other countries.

In Singapore, a programme aimed at developing pupils' personal and social skills was established in the late 1980's and has recently evolved into "Affective and Career Education" with an emphasis on the teaching of life skills. The authors believe that Affective and Career Education will be an essential component of the knowledge base of education in Singapore as we approach the new millennium. This paper will briefly trace the history of Singapore's personal and social education programme (called Pastoral Care and Career Guidance) and detail the components and rationale for the new initiative called "Affective and Career Education."

The History of Affective and Career Education in Singapore

Affective and Career Education began as Pastoral Care and Career Guidance in 1988.¹ Pastoral care is an English term used to describe a

holistic approach to education where not only the academic development of the pupil is key, but also the personal, social and moral development of the individual. Although the word “pastoral” has religious connotations, pastoral care itself is not religious in nature. Pastoral care is synonymous with the word “guidance” used in the U.S., Canada, and Scotland. In these countries, the word “guidance” is used to describe the process of developing personal, social, and career-related skills.

Pastoral care originated from independent boarding schools in 19th century England (*Framework for Implementing Pastoral Care in Primary Schools*, undated MOE document). In these schools, the school population was divided into smaller groups called house groups, each under the charge of a housemaster. Pastoral care described the relationship between housemasters and their young charges and focused not only on the imparting of academic knowledge, but also on the transfer of values; character building; and personal welfare.

The *Framework for Implementing Pastoral Care in the Primary School* (MOE document, undated) defines pastoral care in the Singapore context as encompassing care for the total welfare of the pupil, and can be expressed in organizational aims for the school and personal aims for pupils. Organizational aims will include creating a caring and disciplined school environment so that pupils can learn initiative, responsibility and self discipline; and building an effective working relationship between the school and the community at large so that pupils’ contributions are special and appreciated. Personal aims for pupils include nurturing them towards self identity through developing the pupils socially, mentally and spiritually; and helping them develop to their maximum potential so that they can contribute to and benefit from a changing society.

The pastoral care initiative in Singapore schools began ten years ago with the recognition, in a report entitled *Towards Excellence in Schools* (MOE, 1987), that schools in Singapore needed to urgently address the affective and career needs of their pupils. This report, written by 12 secondary school principals upon their return to Singapore after visiting reputedly good schools in the United Kingdom and the United States, recommended that, “a well-planned comprehensive pastoral care and career guidance programme be introduced in each school” and that “teachers should be involved as pupil counselors.” Later that year, in a concept paper called *Pastoral Care and Career Guidance — A Fresh Approach*, the Guidance and Social Work Unit of the Ministry of Education (now called the Pastoral Care and Career Guidance Branch)

recommended that Singapore schools “offer learning experiences that teach our young not just the technical skills for livelihood but also cultivate in them the compassion and ability to achieve satisfaction of their needs in a caring and responsible manner.” The paper proposed that “the cultivation of caring human relationships in the schools” should be emphasized. The caring element would permeate all areas of school life — for example, the school’s discipline policies, classroom teaching, assessment, co-curricular or extra-curricular activities, involvement with parents, community resources and the provision and use of school facilities.

The MOE responded favorably to this proposal and provided financial support and extra teachers to each school that was selected to pilot this new programme. MOE guidance officers were assigned to all pilot schools to help to operationalize the programme. Mr. Peter Lang from the University of Warwick, an expert in the field of whole-school pastoral care in the United Kingdom, was invited as a consultant to the MOE to conduct a needs assessment as well as training in pastoral care for key officers from both the MOE, the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the 17 secondary schools which were to pilot this initiative in 1988. Following this, systematic training in pastoral care and career guidance for teachers was conducted by both the MOE guidance officers and lecturers from the NIE.

Pastoral Care and Career Guidance in the Secondary School

Under the auspices of pastoral care and career guidance, schools strove to ensure that their school programmes catered to both the academic as well as the personal and social development of pupils. From 1988 to 1993, pastoral care initiatives were introduced in secondary schools in six phases, 1988 — 17 pilot schools, 1989 — 12 schools, 1990 — 19 schools, 1991 — 6 schools, 1992 — 20 schools, and in 1993 — the remaining 65 secondary schools.

Piloting pastoral care meant that schools involved made sure that care-giving was proactive (not reactive), and systematically delivered. There had to be a conscious move away from ‘fire-fighting’ problems (the reactive approach) to using preventive and proactive measures to pre-empt problems. A pastoral curriculum was developed at the school level. Each school developed their own unique programme of guidance activities usually delivered via 35–50 minute lessons using small group work. Activities are centred on developing personal, social, and career-related skills. A bottom-up approach to programme development was

intended to enable each school to meet their pupils' specific needs. Also, in developing their own model for care, the pilot schools were unwittingly contributing to a smorgasbord of viable models for other schools to choose from in the future when it was time for them to implement such a programme. All schools were also encouraged to work pastoral care into their existing academic curriculum and bear in mind the potential effects of the hidden curriculum on the element of care in the school so that pastoral care would permeate all aspects of school life.

Initial Outcomes of Pastoral Care and Career Guidance

After four years of implementation, an evaluation of pastoral care and career guidance initiatives in the 17 pilot secondary schools was conducted in 1991. The findings were published in a report entitled *The Evaluation of the Pastoral Care and Career Guidance Project* (MOE, 1992). Information was gathered from surveys and interviews with pupils, pupil leaders, parents, school management, teaching and non-teaching staff of the schools as well as members of the neighborhood community, such as the police.

The findings of the evaluation showed positive gains in school climate, teacher-pupil rapport, peer interaction, personal and social skills, pupil involvement in extra-curricular activities, discipline, as well as knowledge about educational and career options after completing secondary education. Teachers found that pupils were more motivated to learn, more expressive in class and better disciplined. Pupils tended to be more willing to seek help from teachers if they encountered problems. Teacher collegiality seemed to have improved as well as teacher-administration relations. In some schools, teachers stated that they now worked better with the academically weak pupils, had a greater awareness of themselves as role models, and tended to show more care for pupils' feelings and problems. Greater parental involvement in school activities, programmes, and school management was observed in all pilot schools.

The report (1992) concluded by attributing the success of the pastoral care and career guidance initiative to the following:

- A well-planned pastoral care and career guidance programme developed by each school to meet its own needs;
- Strong leadership from the principal and/or vice-principal, where more than a supervisory role is played;
- Committed teachers;

- Positive pupil response;
- Parental interest and support;
- Out-of-school support;
- A school atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

Such positive gain is evidence that the school should never take its influence for granted. There is additional local research (Koh, 1997) which points to the important role of schools in preventing delinquency. Students who participated in the study were asked about their positive and negative experiences with their family as well as that of the school. Findings showed that those who had both negative experiences at home and at school had higher tendencies towards delinquent behaviour. Students who report that they have at least one positive experience either at home or at schools have lesser tendency towards delinquency. In other words, students who experience positive school climate in spite of negative home environment are less likely to become delinquents. Although teachers may have little influence or control over their students' home environment, they can play an important role in preventing delinquency by ensuring that their students' experience at school is a positive one.

By 1994, seven years after the inception of pastoral care and career guidance, a handbook for principals and teachers on guidelines for implementing pastoral care called *Pastoral Care — A Sharper Focus* was published by the MOE. This publication acknowledged that pastoral care had progressed from being a “safety net” approach in its initial stages of implementation to a “whole school” approach where all teachers became responsible for providing it, and the whole curriculum was used to pursue both the academic and the personal and social development of pupils. Care in the school had made positive steps from being almost always reactive (only key staff involved in helping pupils identified as having problems) to being more proactive (each teacher being responsible for providing pastoral care). A whole-school approach defined in the MOE handbook (1994) as:

- Care for and by all staff;
- Care for and by all pupils;
- Care in all areas of school life

was now in practice in many secondary schools by this time. Six areas of school life were identified as potential areas for the delivery of pastoral care. These were: the school's philosophy and mission; relationships

(involving pupils, teachers, administration and non-teaching staff) and pupil development; school climate; links with parents and the community; integration of pastoral care and career guidance within the existing curriculum; and appraisal of students, teachers and school programmes. Schools were encouraged at this stage to examine these six areas of school life with the aim of appraising the status of whole school care. Schools were encouraged to ensure that their philosophy and mission reflected the goal of whole-school care. Relationships within the school needed to be positive for pastoral care to be present. A rule of thumb was to ensure that each pupil would have at least one teacher and/or a friend whom they can approach about personal problems. Another important focus of pastoral care was improving school atmosphere. Schools were to ensure a safe and cheerful learning environment, characterized by high morale and teamwork among teachers, pupils and school management. Schools were to emphasize a courteous and tension-free atmosphere, where communication is open, and the natural environment respected and cared for. Links with the home, with self-help groups, and the community at large would build whole-school care.

Pastoral Care and Career Guidance in the Primary School

Although the MOE had recognized the importance of implementing pastoral care and career guidance in the primary school, the MOE chose to start the programme in the secondary school because of the more pressing personal and social needs of adolescents at the time. However, after successfully completing the implementation of the programme in secondary schools, the MOE began the process of inducting key school personnel from primary schools in 1994. Pastoral care and career guidance continues to be implemented in primary schools: 1995 — 30 schools, 1996 — 60 schools, 1997 — 50 schools, 1998 — all remaining primary schools.

Affective and Career Education (The ACE Model)

Ten years after the idea was first mooted in *Towards Excellence in Schools* (1987), the importance placed on the overall development of the individual is reiterated in the recent publication of the mission statement of the Pastoral Care and Career Guidance (PCCG) branch of the Ministry of Education (1997): “We seek to develop well-balanced individuals who are able to face challenges, manage changes, work productively, live compassionately and contribute to society.” This was a confirmation of the

commitment of the PCCG Branch towards the education of attitudes, values, and emotions in order to develop resilience, competence, and character among our pupils.

With experience to their credit, the PCCG branch of the Ministry of Education recently launched the Affective and Career Education Model (1997) for all Singapore schools. The Affective and Career Education Model (ACE) includes programmes for the development of lifeskills. Desired outcomes were translated into lifeskills competencies. Lifeskills competencies include the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors that pupils need to possess to become healthy and well-balanced individuals who are able to cope with the pressures of living in a highly competitive and fast-paced society. With lifeskills competencies as their focus, the PCCG branch developed comprehensive sets of guidance activities called *Lifeskills for Effective Living* (1997) for the primary and secondary schools, junior colleges and centralized institutes.

All schools are encouraged to set aside at least 35 minutes or one period of curriculum time per week for lifeskills development. Pupils participate in activity-based individual and group exercises to learn and practice these lifeskills. Each activity is carefully designed with a particular theme in mind and for a particular age group. Procedures to be followed are outlined systematically so that teachers may use the activities with ease. Suggestions for processing the activity are also included.

ACE puts emphasis on small group interaction, focusing on sharing and self-disclosures, which help students to develop better interpersonal relationships. They learn to appreciate and care for one another and to develop different perspectives. At best, every student in the class has a support group so that no one is left isolated or lonely. Affective change is brought about through peer interaction and better teacher-student relationships.

Five areas for developing lifeskills competencies have been identified as key: Personal Effectiveness; Interpersonal Effectiveness, Effective Learning, Transition to Work, and Fostering a Caring Community. To promote personal effectiveness, pupils learn to understand and appreciate themselves, develop skills to ensure personal well-being and personal safety, decision-making and problem-solving skills, and skills for managing change. Besides personal effectiveness, pupils are encouraged to develop interpersonal effectiveness. Skills pupils are encouraged to practice are understanding and appreciating others, developing skills for working and relating effectively with others. Activities geared towards teaching

pupils to understand and appreciate the process of learning, as well as developing effective learning habits are also part of the ACE model.

As Singapore's only resource is her people, the government has recognized the need for career education across the life-span, beginning in the primary school. Thus, such lifeskills as developing career self-awareness, and developing skills for exploring careers is introduced to primary school pupils. From a young age, success in one's professional life is linked to success at learning. Lifeskills in career awareness and exploration function to help pupils make the meaningful links between the academic curriculum and their future in the world of work.

Fostering a caring community is another lifeskill competency that has been identified as essential to the development of a harmonious city-state. Pupils are given the opportunity through stimulating classroom activities to understand and appreciate better the communities around them, and are encouraged to respond to the special needs in the community by volunteering their services for community projects. For example, all pupils of a particular class level would "adopt" a home for intellectually challenged children. Time will be set aside outside the academic curriculum time for groups of these pupils to visit the home, play with the children, work on beautifying the natural environment of the home, etc. Before pupils visit the home, their teacher will have them find out more about mentally challenged children, and a discussion will be held in class to help pupils know what to expect and how to relate effectively with their new friends when they visit the home. Class time will also be set aside for the pupils to process their experience with their classmates after each of their visits.

The ACE Model also includes programmes which identify the special needs of pupils, making adequate financial and material provisions for needy pupils, and providing support to pupils with special health conditions, and pupils with personal and family problems. To complete the picture, schools are encouraged to develop a "culture of care" within their schools by nurturing a positive school climate, a disciplined environment, and positive engagement between all staff and students. It is hoped that modeling caring and support will also result in developing truly caring citizens.

The MOE has initiated other affective and career education programmes to complement Lifeskills for Effective Living. One such programme is Personal and Social Responsibility, an affective programme for lower secondary pupils developed by Dembrowsky (1988). This programme aims to help pupils build self-esteem, self-identity and to

develop their talents. It also aims to empower pupils to assume responsibility for their actions as well as to relate responsibly to others.

Originating from Australia, the Peer Support Programme is now carried out in many Singapore secondary schools. It is aimed at inducting pupils to secondary school, thereby enabling them to feel a sense of security and belonging in their new environment, and empowering them to make responsible decisions and develop assertiveness skills. Peer Support is an interactive programme of group activities conducted by peer leaders from upper classes. Peer Mediation, another intervention, has been introduced to schools. In this programme, pupils are trained as peer mediators to resolve disputes among their peers using the conflict-resolution process.

A programme called Project KARE (Keeping At-Risk Enrolled) targeted at potential pre-mature school leavers uses a series of adventure learning activities to help pupils gain self-esteem and meaning in life. The programme involves the pupils in discussing academic and personal issues.

A career guidance software package called JOBS (Jobs Orientation Backup System) developed by the NIE helps pupils obtain their career profile-interests, abilities and work values, and provides them with a list of possible career options. Each school is sponsored by the National Trade Union Congress Insurance Company (NTUC-INCOME) with a computer installed with the JOBS programme. Secondary school pupils also participate in organized "Work Experience" where pupils are placed in actual work situations from one to three weeks during the school vacation. The National Science and Technologies Board participates in the School-Adoption scheme where selected pupils carry out supervised research projects. In addition, five Zonal Career Resource Centers have been set up for pupils and teachers and provide career information and career guidance services to pupils in the zone.

Restructuring the Knowledge Base of Teacher Education

The NIE, in recognizing the importance of whole school care and the affective and career development of pupils, provides both pre-service and in-service teacher-training in pastoral care and career guidance, as well as in basic counseling skills. At the pre-service level, student teachers may choose to offer an elective on Guidance and Counseling. This 30-hour course will introduce them to the concept of affective and career education, as well as give them hands-on experience on how to implement lifeskills activities. Basic counseling skills are also taught in this course.

The growing need for counseling and interpersonal skills for teachers is evidenced by the consistently large enrolment in this course every year.

The NIE is also committed to in-service training in affective and career education. It offers a part-time eight-module course, which culminates in an in-service diploma in pastoral care and career guidance. Each of the eight modules comprises a 10-week 30-hour course. Since the introduction of this in-service diploma programme in 1989, more than 5,000 teachers have undergone training in Module One and about 100 teachers have received the 8-module in-service diploma. The courses offered are listed in Table 1.

These courses involve hands-on activities that engage teachers affectively as they participate in experiential learning and learn to give as well as receive care and support from their colleagues. Thus, it is not uncommon for groups starting at Module One to become so cohesive that they progress to Module Eight as a group as they have enjoyed the sharing and the support from each other.

Table 1 List of Course Modules Leading to the In-Service Diploma in Pastoral Care and Career Guidance (National Institute of Education)

Module Number	Module Name
Module 1	Introduction to Pastoral Care and Career Guidance
Module 2	Basic Skills in Pastoral Groupwork
Module 3	Basic Skills in Pastoral Casework
Module 4	Planning and Implementing Career Guidance in Schools
Module 5	Developing and Implementing a Pastoral Curriculum
Module 6	Assessment and Evaluation in Pastoral Care
Module 7	Advanced Skills in Pastoral Groupwork and Casework
Module 8	Research and Development in Pastoral Care and Career Guidance

Conclusion

Education is designed to equip pupils for success in life. As the requirements for successful living evolve, so must our educational system. As we look to the new millennium, a few things seem clear. We need our citizens to be able to adapt and learn quickly. No longer can we expect to learn something once and be set for life. We need our citizens to be resourceful. Instead of just following orders, we need people who can think for themselves and find solutions to problems. In order to do that, we must learn to work co-operatively, and not competitively with others. Effective interpersonal transactions are based on trust and caring.

Over the last decade, PCCG and now, ACE programmes have taught lifeskills necessary for living productively in society. We believe our attempts to improve the affective, career, and relational domains of our pupils will combine well with the traditional focus on cognitive skill development to produce citizens ready and able to handle the challenges of the new millennium.

Note

1. Prior to 1988, what is now called “Affective and Career Education” was conducted on an *ad hoc* basis by a handful of schools, particularly the government-aided mission schools. There was no systematic delivery of such a programme then.

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