

Pan Visits KMSSHS---Pioneering School for the New Curriculum Guidelines

(Courtesy of Tsai, Meng-Kai, Division of Academic and Vocational Senior High Education)



On May 21, 2017, Pan, Wen-Chung, Minister of Education visited Kaohsiung Municipal Sanmin Senior High School (KMSSHS) in person to learn more about how pioneering senior high schools were implementing the 12-year national compulsory curriculum guidelines (hereinafter referred as the “new curriculum guidelines”) on a trial basis. KMSSHS was selected by the Ministry of Education as one of the pioneering schools in the Kaohsiung area for this pilot project. Commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Education Bureau, Kaohsiung City Government, Chen, Pei-Ying, professor from National Taiwan Normal University and her team worked to organize teachers’

communities, incorporate features of the local community, and develop modified required and elective courses.

According to Pan, Kaohsiung City has done a good job in terms of encouraging teachers to flip the classroom step by step since 2014. In the meantime, Kaohsiung has taken the lead with Compulsory Education Advisory Group of the Kaohsiung Municipal Department of Education in establishing the 12-year national compulsory education development team during the academic year of 2015 to help senior high schools develop curricular with their own characteristics. The new curriculum guidelines have gained traction in Kaohsiung as many schools on different grade levels intend to give it a try. Pan has acknowledged the efforts put into by KMSSHS to be a pioneer for a variety of seminars on the new curriculum guidelines to help teachers develop further, including introduction of the new curriculum guidelines and co-preparation for classes. Furthermore, he also attended quite a few elective classes with unique features developed by the school's teachers, and was impressed by how the school's team of teachers from different academic backgrounds incorporated local features and offered the inter-disciplinary, religion-based course "Traces of Gods and Power of Fortune-telling."

Under Fan, Syun-Lyu's leadership, Director-General of Education Bureau, Kaohsiung City Government held a curriculum exposition, titled "Be Diverse and Inter-disciplinary in 2017," with 27 demo courses where teachers demonstrated their jointly prepared lessons on the spot, and 52 featured courses where description of the courses were displayed, attracting more than 600 principals, teachers, parents, and students. Pan expressed gratitude as he saw people from different cities and counties exchanging their experiences, sharing their results, and demonstrating their willingness to learn from each other.

Pan pointed out that the new curriculum guidelines have incorporated a great deal of emphasis on “potential unlocking” to help each child develop their own special talents in line with the principles of autonomy, mutuality, and reciprocity. Everyone resonates with the vision and value of the curriculum guidelines in great anticipation. Therefore, many local education bureaus have proactively pushed forward a pilot project and encouraged teachers to participate. Among them, Education Bureau, Kaohsiung City Government has taken the lead. Recently, the K-12 Education Administration, Ministry of Education also set up a strategic alliance comprising six cities and will work with the central and local governments more proactively to pave the way for, and push forward the new curriculum guidelines.

Moreover, Pan also stressed that, in order to show the determination to implement the new curriculum guidelines and offer diverse elective courses for students to take based on their own preferences, the Ministry of Education has laid out a whole package, including the adjustment of the college entrance exam, announcement of counseling services for 18 major fields of the college and courses of senior high school, and study and revision of regulations for elective courses of senior high school, focal points of course counseling services as well as students’ learning profile. In the meantime, the Ministry of Education will start to work on a budget for schools to recruit teachers for the diverse electives and the cost for the learning space and equipment. All of this aims to help schools, so that they can offer the diverse electives as planned while living up to the idea of “potential unlocking” advocated in the new curriculum guidelines.

Teachers’ professional development is also the key to the success of the new curriculum guidelines. Pan mentioned that “core competencies” championed in the new curriculum guidelines need to rely on teachers’ effort to design the curriculum, as well as

their approach to teach, and measure students' competencies that are based on the guidelines. As such, students will enjoy positive development in areas, such as cognition, emotions, skills, and attitude. Meanwhile, the best way for teachers to develop further professionally is to jointly prepare for lessons, discuss the real situation in class, and how other teachers conduct their classes. On this front, KMSSHS has witnessed great achievements, particularly in "Traces of Gods and Power of Fortune-telling" a demonstration class open for others to watch, in which the inter-disciplinary nature in design and the amazing effect are more than visible. By incorporating various subject areas, including geography, English, chemistry, mathematics, and information, this course enables students to pick up writing skills, know more about local cultures and history, learn about the current situation of religions, and in turn realize the preciousness of life and learn to feel grateful for what they have.

Pan encouraged KMSSHS to share its experience as a pioneering school with other schools of different grade levels through seminars, workshops, presentations, forums, discussion meetings, or other channels to plan for new courses for the new curriculum guidelines. Furthermore, all the problems and suggestions brought up by the pioneering schools when implementing the new curriculum guidelines will be reported to the Ministry of Educations for further refinement of the program and help schools put the new curriculum guidelines in place.

Pan stressed that the success of the guidelines lies in the close cooperation between the central and local stakeholders, which serves as the ultimate support for those enthusiastic teachers, who are willing to revolutionize the curriculum and flip the classroom so that they can lead students, without any concerns, to explore a variety of areas, develop specialties, and become excellent citizens who know how to communicate, mutually understand each other, and participate in society. The ideas of

“autonomy, mutuality, and reciprocity” as well as “lifelong learning” will thereby be realized.