

School-based cultural investigation research program and School Visit to Mainland China (Example of Educative Practice for S6 Students)

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We have a 20-year Mainland visit program (in which 13 years in F6 have a continued Mainland visit program). We have a collection of tour journals produced from 1991-2010 covering more than 40 school tours to China and involving more than 1,700 students.

There are over 200 partner schools or colleges (all sponsored by Tin Ka Ping Foundation). Thus, apart from the involvement of the whole school, over 88 schools were invited to collaborate with their host school and students and teachers of these 88 mainland schools also shared the interactive learning and teaching experiences.

There is no doubt that students' knowledge about China is enriched, problem-solving skills are enhanced and self-directed learning is promoted.

I · The description of learning and teaching

1. Educative practice

(1) Following is the summary of a 13-year continued cultural investigation research program on the whole S6 (Note 1):

Date	Investigation Items	Extramural Fund	Number of student participants
Apr. 2011	Learning three main strategic directions of China's 12th Five-Year Plan through the development of mining industry, agriculture, and cultural conservation in Shanxi: "deal with post-financial crisis, adjust economic structure, further improve people's livelihood"	Funded by Commission on Youth Participation Scheme for Organizing Study Tours to the Mainland (Approved)	60 (Estimated)
Apr. 2010	Reconstruction of Western and Northern Sichuan after Wenchuan earthquake and	Funded by Commission on Youth	59

	financial tsunami (Guangyuan&Qingchuan Tour, Ya'an&Yingxiu Tour) (7 days)	Participation Scheme for Organizing Study Tours to the Mainland	
Mar. 2009	Continuity of Central Plains Culture, rural reform, and Yellow Reviver area investigation in Henan Province (Kaifeng Tour, Xinxiang Tour) (7Days)	Funded by Law's Charitable Foundation	60
Mar. 2008	Understanding cultural continuity and challenges brought by foreign investment from Shandong visit (Qufu&Jinan Tour, Rizhao&Yantai Tour) (7Days)	Funded by National Education Sub-committee under the Commission on Youth and Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education	60
Mar. 2007	Capital and grassland under the Green Olympic (Chifeng Tour, Wuchuan Tour) (7 Days)	Funded by National Education Sub-committee under the Commission on Youth and Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education	60
Mar. 2006	Yunnan minority culture investigation (Kunming, Qujing, Shilin, Lijiang, Yulong Mountain) (7 Days)	Funded by Commission on Youth	60
Mar. 2005	Guangxi (Northern Guilin) minority culture investigation (Dazhai Tour, Longjizhai Tour) (7 Days)	Funded by Education Bureau's Chinese Cultural Program Scheme	62
Mar. 2004	The history and culture of the South of Yangtze Reviver and its current social and economic development: Nanjing, Yangzhou, Suzhou (7 Days)	Funded by Education Bureau's Chinese Cultural Program Scheme and Yan Oi Tong	60
Mar. 2003	Hakka culture investigation in Western Fujian and Northeastern Guangdong (7 Days)	Funded by Education Bureau's Chinese Cultural Program Scheme	52
Mar. 2002	Shaanxi Province investigation: Loess Plateau culture and CPC's history (5 Days)	Funded by Education Bureau's Chinese Cultural Program Scheme and Quality Education Fund	16
	Guangdong Dabu, Fujian Yongding investigation: Hakka culture (5 Days)		46

Mar. 2001	Chu Chiang Delta investigation (4 Days)	Liannan Tour: National culture Zhaoqing Tour: Geography and environmental protection Qingyuan Tour: Agricultural culture	Guangzhou Tianhe Bookstore, Huangpu Tian's Chemical Plant	Funded by Education Bureau's Chinese Cultural Program Scheme	61
Mar. 2000	Chu Chiang Delta investigation (3 Days)	Liannan Tour: Poverty alleviation and primary school in mountain area Qingyuan Tour: Education and rural area Guangzhou Tour: City and rural area	Guangzhou Tianhe Bookstore, Dongguan Tian's Chemical Plant	Funded by Motherland 50th National Day Monographic Study Scheme	65
Mar. 1999	Chu Chiang Delta investigation (3 Days)	Dongguan Factory, Weiyuan Battery, Lin Zexu Historical Museum, Guangzhou primary and secondary schools, Tianhe Booksotre, Group A: Panyu Xinken town, Group B: South China Sea Pingzhou		Funded by Education Bureau's Chinese Cultural Program Scheme	62

(2) Educative strategy:

In start-up phase of the research, the student group is required to draw up the theme and research method for the fieldtrip referring to the travel plan draft, teachers' introduction, and supplemented by reading relative information themselves. It will cost about two months for to ascertain the theme and research method. During that period, students should report their progress and provide feedback to the mentor they invited (intramural teacher) as well as the grade meeting.

Many adolescent students prefer to research mainland teenagers' lifestyle, such as study, amusement, or diet, which would easily make their research superficial and make the report content incompact. To deal with these circumstances, in recent years, teacher organizers would provide several research dimensions according to the object and theme of the curriculum of the visit program, among which students could choose freely. It belongs to a semi-open subject model. For example, in the trip to Beijing & Inner Mongolia in 2007, organizers first ascertained dimensions such as,

Olympic, desertification, Mongolia, and environmental protection. Among those dimensions, students could choose one or more as their research theme. In 2009, during the fieldtrip to Henan, dimensions like Yellow River, Shaolin, agriculture, and Central Plains Culture were given for students to choose.

The investigation process focuses on students' interaction with local people, especially with local primary & secondary students, farmers, and workers. Activities include visiting, having dinners, and accommodating in local students' home, being teachers in primary school, as well as street interviews. Promote emotional communication between two parties by direct interacting. Put people-oriented education into effect. After returning Hong Kong, students are required to refer a specified report format to sort out what they got during the fieldtrip and interview. Then they should analyze and integrate information to test their hypothesis and finally submit their report and photos. Usually this report would be the most complete and the deepest project during their entire secondary school life. It is also a summary of their investigation research.

A. Collaborative project research

Curriculum Development Council (2000) consultation document "Learning to learn" pointed out that project research is the key project of "promote learning to learn". Culture investigation is interdisciplinary, cross learning areas, and even beyond the boundary of any subject and learning area. Through all-rounded investigation activity, which provides unique and various learning experience, students can relate knowledge and skills they controlled to values and attitudes and then construct knowledge. Collaborative project research centers on students. From topic discovery, defining research question, to planning research method and even the way to present learning outcome are determined by students. The aim is to develop their habit of autonomic learning, to further train students' reflection, self-management as well as self-monitoring ability.

Investigation research is a learning process which is derived by students' self-determining research topic, and under the group cooperation mode students support each other, share and interact with each other, and search for solution collectively. Project research combined with exploring-type learning can promote students' ability and attitude of leadership, communication, division of work, mutual appreciation, sharing responsibility. During the relatively open and autonomous learning progress, students are supported to apply different learning strategies and research methods to solve and approach problems, and they can gain, transform, and apply knowledge from this process with teachers' encourage and promotion. The aim is that expect students to achieve a higher level ability, and the learning outcome is open and polynary, which is called "learning from doing".

B. Affective education

Culture investigation emphasizes affective education, focusing on students' attitude, emotion, feeling, and belief during the educative process for the purpose of promoting their individual development and groupment development. The investigation process respects and develops students' emotional quality, provides chances for students to have direct contact, positive communication, and open interview with mainland people. It also makes students experience different faces of poverty, underdevelopment, developing and wealthy. The real and in-depth perception and emotional communication trigger students' automatic emotional regulation ability and lead to their affective experience towards learning, life in mainland, and nation's current circumstances. Derived motivation from appreciation, training consideration from distaste, forming personal unique and deep emotion towards nation and country, fostering practice of self-love, love people, love society, love nation, love country.

C. Issue-Enquiry Approach

The process of promoting students' project research mainly uses Issue-Enquiry Approach to foster and stimulate students' learning motivation. It emphasizes the logicity of thought and urges students to respect interpersonal communication, to care each other, to bear open-minded answers. Teachers respect and expect students' learning life, encourage them to pursuit knowledge, truth, and kindness. Besides, it also respects teachers' teaching life and appreciates group mentor and leading teacher's work of promoting students' participation in learning. In the process of perceiving and experiencing society and humanity in mainland we respect students' self-renewing and constructive gains.

Generally speaking, the Issue-Enquiry Approach investigation research emphasizes students' cooperation and constructive gains, values broadening students' outlook, thinking development, interpersonal communication, in order to change their existing stereotype. According to different student and groups' research plan, teacher will give them some advice supplement in appropriate time, including study preparation and continuous checking as well as feedback students' gain from the investigation.

(3) Course evaluation

In the evaluation aspect of the investigation of S6 every year, because students participate in project research in groups, the evaluation method should gear to individual as well as group. Students need do several presentations before the fieldtrip. Group mentor and other students will give them all-around feedback and evaluation. After the presentations, an evaluation form also needs to be filled out before the fieldtrip.

During the investigation, students are required to form groups every other night, and to present intraday activities and prepare the next day's events. In the last night before leaving, all groups will do presentation to preliminary summarize the outcome

of their investigation. All the participants are asked to fill out an evaluation form after they returned Hong Kong. Groups should submit project research report, presentation report as well as personal reflection. Mentor of each group will evaluate group report and the participation performance of the whole group. In addition, group members will also evaluate each other. In the end, the organizer teachers will do the final overall evaluation and adjust the scores.

The outstanding students and groups will receive a certificate and book tokens as reward. The score of investigation will also be listed in the score sheet of S6, which counts 5% of the GPA.

2. Learning outcome

Through the process of research and several days' investigation, students can have a better understanding of the current development in specific cities and provinces, for example citizen's lives, gaps between rural and urban, rural circumstances, school education, and economic development, and have a deep perception and personal thoughts in particular topics. The following three statements of project will show particular students' cognitive gains.

II. Sharing and Promotion

The sharing and communication of S6's culture investigation research plan of our school covers all internal teachers and students and local educational fellows. Besides, we also have close communication and interaction with teachers and students of mainland schools. Those sharing and communication are helpful in enhancing our students' national identity and in producing familiarity and acceptance towards rural & urban, people, and culture of mainland, laying foundation for their unconditional and responsible contribution to our nation and society in the future. The following are examples of sharing and promotion activities:

Paper Presentation on International Conference	Choi, Kwok-kwong (2010) on the 2 nd East Asian International Conference on Teacher Education Research.
Published collection of tour journals (books and periodicals version and electronic version)	Annual plan to complete, edit, and publish collection of tour journals 9 sets, which are delivered to local educational fellows and Tin Ka Ping series schools in mainland. The electronic version is uploaded (Note 6), connecting to school website (Note 7). In May 2010, invited by the Efficiency Unit, we submitted the e-version of Sichuan investigation report (narrative and photos) for uploading to Youth.gov.hk "Youth Delegation" Features website.

Co-organized by Law's Charitable Foundation and Education Bureau	2007 / 2008 "Hong Kong and Mainland China Sister Schools' Cultural Communication Award Scheme" winning school. Mainland school: Shandong Qufu Tin Ka Ping Secondary school; Program name: Understanding cultural continuity and challenges brought by foreign investment from Shandong visit.
	2008 / 2009 "Hong Kong and Mainland China Sister Schools' Cultural Communication Award Scheme" Merit Award for Communication. Mainland school: Henan Xinxiang Tin Ka Ping High School; Program name: Yesterday's antiquities, today's development, tomorrow's education—Hong Kong-Henan Tin Ka Ping sister schools student exchange program.
Published by Hong Kong Teacher's Center	Choi, Kwok-kwong (2009). "Investigation Research and National Education". Teacher's Center Fax. 71.
Teacher organizers were invited to attend lectures	Sharing experience of investigation and research in mainland with secondary school fellows in Hong Kong Lingnan University, Hong Kong Baptist University.
Beijing No. Nine secondary school and Inner Mongol Chifeng Tin Ka Ping secondary school	Mar. 2007, S6 students visited Beijing No. Nine secondary school and Inner Mongol Chifeng Tin Ka Ping secondary school. These two schools paid return visits to our school in May and June in the same year.
Henan Xinxiang Tin Ka Ping High School	March 2009, S6 students exchanged to Henan Xinxiang Tin Ka Ping High School. In March of the next year, teachers and students of Xinxiang T. school paid a return visit to our school.

The process of investigation provides plenty of chances for communication between Hong Kong and mainland students as well as teachers. The educational features and lifestyle distinguishes between two places broaden both sides' understanding of each other. We appreciate mainland educational fellows' ideas and practices towards our investigation research as a paragon of educational advanced district. On the other hand, Hong Kong students' sensitive thinking and excellent performance as young teachers in primary school broaden mainland teachers and students' vision. Our students also experienced mainland students' positive attitude towards learning chances.

III. Summary and Prospect

Over years, our school is able to hold relatively more and larger scale investigation in mainland, including about 200 Tin Ka Ping series middle schools and advanced education units' supports. The teacher organizers can contact with mainland Bureau of Education or institutions directly. Therefore, it is easier for us to complete the

designation of investigation program. The designation means that the investigation must include: visit local Tin Ka Ping School, visiting local students' home, being teachers in rural primary school, visiting rural family, farming in the field, visiting enterprise, interviewing workers, shopping and chatting with citizens, understanding local and social circumstances, and so on.

Several days' investigation should provide clear and meaningful learning content to students. In this respect, group project research is an ideal method. The investigation encourages and leads students to pay attention to people and environment, fostering observing more, interviewing more, and experiencing current national development, social conditions, national features, and cultural performances. Combining information collection before the fieldtrip, several times group presentations, as well as rational analyzing and emotional reflecting after the investigation, collecting and editing students' reports and photos into journals, sharing and communicating within and among schools, the investigation program become an interdisciplinary national education course.

Over years, the teacher organizers continued to organize large scale and deeply research programs. They also reflect the relationship between investigation research and national education frequently.

Through the investigation, students can have direct experiences. They can see the development and percept the dark side of politics and society as well. The role of teacher is to stimulate students to think in multiple respects, to encourage students to care national and social development and appreciate people and objects around them, which can increase their knowledge and enrich their emotion. As for behavioral practice, as it relates to the origin of thought, personal motivation, behavioral outcome, there is no formulated outcome or one-line process, but only students' personal choice and fortune in the future.

Regarding the limitation and forward-looking of the whole program, there are the following several aspects

(1)The investigation may not achieve the goals.

This kind of filed investigation, which hopes that students will have some feelings and experiences, inevitably face the unstable achievement.

1. In Mainland China, especially the remote area investigation, it is difficult to pre-examine. So, we just depend on secondary information such as the Internet, books and local newspapers, and let students based on those to prepare themselves. But the actual situation may be changed, so what students obtain is lower than we anticipated. For example, the Wuchuan County investigation in 2007 met March. The grass had not grown up, and grassland did not appear. So, the pasture did not open. The local education department had found some pastures for us. However, the pasture was closed on that day. Finally, we visited a small-scale pasture.

Without interviewing the herdsmen, students just experienced rounding up sheep and eating roast lamb.

2. The ancient cities in China with special cultural features have been gradually commercializing. There are many boutiques in the cities, and the pristine residents have lived into the covert lanes. The scheduled cannot be changed immediately so that would affect the study achievement.

For instance, in 2006, we visited Lijiang City in Yunnan. We thought there would be many information students could get, but the city has been a mature shopping area. The shopkeeper, sales and tourists all are busy and not willing to accept the interview. Moreover, the local residents are seldom seen. Besides, facing the temptation of featured souvenir, most students put focus on shopping, so students could get less information in Lijiang City.

3. The Mainland host organization and travel guide do not understand the purpose of the investigation trip. Maybe, they would treat us as the regular tour group, not give students enough time to communicate with the local residents. Sometimes, they are so warm that spend much time on coshery.

For example, the Fujian investigation in 2002, when we visited Yongding Earth, the local guide kept students on listening to her explanation instead of wandering around. Because the local education department arranged the dinner for us, the guide constantly urged the team to leave. Therefore, the leading teachers had to delay the schedule for getting more time to investigate local situations. Otherwise, the investigation plan would not be executed.

(2) There cannot be too many requirements on students, while the results may not be quite satisfied with the anticipation.

S6 students should take responsible for multiple roles. They have to face the original heavy learning requirements, and spent time on adapting to and keeping up the progress. Meanwhile, most of them are student leaders with the responsibility for promoting extracurricular activities.

Within the restrictions, the process of eight-month investigation studying the national culture cannot be exclusive. To balance the study and program, requesting students pay too many efforts would be self-defeating.

Therefore, in the early phase of the preparation, students should only concentrate on choosing topic, make study proposal and collect the secondary information. They could not read a large number of references as the basis. Before the departure, students are more willing to lay aside the learning task and activities for the final preparing of investigation's work and study as well as the accommodation of mind and body. After the investigation, with great passion and memory, students would try their best to finish the report. The passion of students would fade, and the groups would also be dissolved. Therefore, students could

return to the normal life and face the coming of more and more academic pressures.

Due to that, requesting students to modify the final report again is difficult to reach. So, when we select some excellent works to compete in a public contest, the report is always weak in the analysis of the references and background and failing to go further.

Take 2003 Henan investigation as an example, there was a group studying the differences of temple monument in honor of sages between east and west. During the field investigation, they had found something interesting, and the argument was quite proper. However, when teachers wanted them to do the modifications, the original group-members could not be gathered. Actually, it is very pity to give it up.

(3). Is YOT TKP school background necessary to conduct this kind of investigation program?

Undoubtedly, with the assistance of TKP foundation, it is easy to for our school to get touch with the domestic TKP secondary schools and get the cooperation from the colleges and universities. Furthermore, facilitated with the support of local education department, we could conduct this kind of experiential learning. But, there are still many sites for the public visit. As the booming of domestic tourism market, to meet the different tastes of customers, there have been a wide range of travel routes, such as agricultural lines, the red line of revolutionary history, environmental conservation line, all are available. Many of them are worth of being explored by students.

Dazhai in Shanxi province was the special one in the red time, but how does it adapt to market-oriented modern agriculture? The Wenchuan earthquake epicenter, Yingxiu Town, is easily reached by highways, but how is the reconstruction progress and current status? Zhuxian Town in Henan Province is reduced from the four famous towns to the city's small town on the edge, how does it struggle for survival? This is all travel arrangements to reach the required inspection points. In addition, communication with the secondary school in Mainland and experience in countryside all could be reached by contacting travel agencies.

More importantly, as promotion of quality-oriented education in Mainland, “field research” study form is gradually understood by the Mainland schools which made their cooperation easier than before. Finally, the key is whether the schools are willing to spend time on taking back the dominant power with the purpose and plan, and make room and time for students to explore, to experience. Of course, the stage of secondary school is very important to lay the foundation in students learning subject research.

(4) After the end of the old secondary six-year system, does it mean the existing “whole-grade participation” learning model of investigation end? Will a new form be launched?

The whole S6 grade during school sessions joining the domestic investigation, (approximately 200 people per grade) is impossible under a new high school system. But S4 and S5 students who have interests could be grouped. Definitely, we must make use of non-school time for teaching activities.

And how to cooperate with the school-based assessment of respective subjects in the new high school system is going to be the important thinking point. Different groups have different themes. It must be diverse so that S4 or S5 students with different interests could participate. Moreover, different modes of participation should be allowed like individual or group, even inside or outside school. The achievements should be in diversity so as to satisfy the different requirements of assessment in different subjects. Finally, the original modes which are worth to reserve should be maintained including:

1. The issues enable students to know current state of the nation
2. Communication and home-visit among young students
3. The life experience in the countryside

Look forward to the future, as the increasing convenient transportation between mainland and Hong Kong, combined with the leading edge development of curriculum and education, the implementation of new high school system and six-year continued middle school system, local schools are more capable to beyond the classroom and to exercise cultural tourism-style investigation research in interdisciplinary or non-scientist mode.

By participating the investigation students have deeply and personal experience so that they can distinguish the differences between urban and rural, percept social snobbery, discover historical legacy, explore life and social change. After students forming personal perceptions, they would feel much closer to motherland and nation.