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Improve Teaching Effectiveness While Pursuing Professional Development

If a parent truly cares for his/ her children, s/he will not only pay close attention to the children's daily needs, but will also show concern for their studies. When kids talk about schools with their parents, they often mention their teachers' performance. It is easy to notice that teachers with certain characteristics always enjoy respect and popularity among students; these characteristics include upholding the principle of treating students fairly, showing love and care for students, acting as a role model for students, having a sense of humour and real competency. To attain such characteristics, aside from innate talents, it is also important for a teacher to have continuous professional development. As teachers are influential role models for students in terms of life development, it is all parents' hope that their children can encounter teachers with the above-mentioned characteristics in their study life.

With the need for education reform, the social requirements for teachers have also changed. In the past, teachers were only required to complete daily teaching tasks, but nowadays they have to keep improving themselves in order to enhance the teaching quality. The "System Framework for Private School Teaching Staff of Non-tertiary Education" (hereinafter referred to as the "Private School Framework"), promulgated in 2012 by the Macao SAR Government, has defined, among others, teaching staff's rights, obligations, appointment qualification as well as incentives regarding teachers' professional development. Today's education reform lays stress on the idea of developing school through scientific research, because if teachers can review their teaching performance from a researcher's perspective, they can improve their teaching progressively. To acquire the ability to conduct research, a teacher should keep improving himself/herself by pursuing further studies and put what has been learnt into practice. As teachers are rather busy with their teaching and studies nowadays, they should also improve their time management skills so that they can take a good rest from the busy work during holidays. Besides, teachers should develop their internal capacity and make full use of available resources, such as education research findings, to improve their teaching performance. As far as I know, there are a lot of winning works of the Award Scheme on Instructional Design in the library of the Centre of Educational Resources of the DSEJ and on its website. The works are easily accessible and are valuable reference materials. Better teaching outcomes can be achieved if teachers pay attention to the findings of education research and apply effective teaching methods in their teaching.

People in the society have also expressed concern about the great working pressure suffered by teachers. One of the pressure sources may be teachers' attitudes towards their professional development. I have talked with some teachers and they all think that rather than a good salary, it is the effectiveness of teaching and positive feedback from students that are most rewarding. Therefore, if a teacher cannot obtain the sense of achievement through teaching or cannot feel and enjoy students' development and progress, it is very difficult for him/her to further enhance teaching effectiveness.

It is all parents' hope that their children can encounter teachers who are energetic, attach importance to teaching improvement and are in constant pursuit of better teaching outcomes, so that their children can be guided to a correct path. Modern educational psychology stresses that a good teacher should always be self-conscious, which means that s/he ought to be fully aware of what is happening in his/her teaching environment and should give appropriate response in a conscious manner. If a teacher just indulges himself/herself with the routine teaching work, it will be difficult for him/her to think effectively. Although training is important for the professional development of teachers, there are still many teachers considering it a burden. From another perspective, it is very important to clarify professional value and helping teachers develop their individual teaching potential. With regard to this issue, the "Private School Framework" has reduced teaching staff's weekly teaching hours, while encouraging them to pursue professional development. It is believed that these measures will create better conditions for teachers to pursue further studies.

Sometimes children will tell parents that although some of the teachers are strict with them, they still enjoy love and respect of the students. In fact, according to what I have learnt from some teachers, apart from arising from the school's rigid attitude towards the culture of teaching, student problems are closely related to the way that teachers teach, and are, particularly, greatly influenced by their relationship with teachers. As far as an inexperienced teacher is concerned, if s/he wants to establish a good relationship with students and address student problems properly, s/he needs to learn constantly to accumulate experience. The teacher not only needs to apply his/her own skills when solving student problems, but also needs to share and discuss the problems that they cannot solve with other people, rather than trying to solve the problems individually. Indeed, it is very difficult for a teacher to deal with student problems individually. An effective education is inseparable from the cooperation between teachers, social workers and counselling staff of the school. Besides, teachers should develop their teaching skills through professional trainings, which, to some extent, can reduce their working pressure. It is because more often than not, teachers' working pressure is caused by their incorrect teaching methods. If teachers think that their teaching is ineffective, it is likely there will be more problems in their teaching. A quality and highly effective education, thus, requires teachers to pursue continuous learning. More importantly, teachers should review every step they have made during the learning process. For example, teachers should review what they have learnt from the trainings they receive and what improvements they have made, etc. After all, it is not the course certificate or the academic degree that a teacher can use to improve the teaching outcomes.

To conclude, it is all parents' hope that their children can learn and grow healthily under the guidance of a good teacher and the path to becoming a good teacher is continuous professional learning.

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