

# 2017\_My Vision Towards Education

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## Messages from Principal:

My Vision Towards Education

*Alan Ping-yan CHOW*

Dear Fellow Colleagues, Students, Parents and Friends,

Very much thanksgiving that I was appointed by the School Management Committee as the Principal of W F Joseph Lee Primary School (WFJLPS) commencing 2017-18 school year! It is really my great honour to work with so many vision-driven, passionate, experienced, professional and moral educators in this school! As a new principal, usually people might be very much interested to know who I am, what my vision towards education is, how I exercise the principalship role here and how different it is, and what strategies I might use to further improve the school into a greater school (Hopkins, 2007).

Basically, there are two primary views looking at what the purpose of schools is. According to Peterson (2005), some people believe that the purpose of schools should centre on the word 'citizenship', helping children develop their own capacity for success in life and becoming effective citizens for democracy – individuals who have skills, attitudes, and knowledge to be productive community members, leaders, parents, and workers. For others, they believe the ultimate purpose is to create workers who can meet the standards of industry.

Among the purposes of education are to raise the dignity of each child, to bring to destination all children, and indeed all people (Alexander and Potter, 2005). All children have the right to learn. They are the masters of their destiny and that is why they have their full authority to choose where, when, what and how to learn. To me, education is concerned with the formation of each person. It forms people

- of love, care, and compassion;
- who appreciate and will create beauty; and
- who have the urge and the abilities to serve others.

Much of what we learn through education arises not from the 'content' but from the ways in which we learn. It has as much to do with how we learn as to what we learn.

As learners, we expect them to be able to:

- ask their own questions;
- think critically and creatively;
- reason effectively;
- motivate themselves and others;

- work with others; make choices of their own;
- manage, monitor and improve their own learning to solve problems.

Education today is not a matter of transmission of knowledge or concepts or ideas from teachers to students or from adults to children. It is not essentially about 'information', but about 'formation' or 'construction'. At the heart of education is the formation of people of enquiry and intellectual debate. More importantly, it is about helping our students to experience learning. They should:

- learn how to become;
- learn how to be;
- learn how to do;
- learn how to learn; and
- learn how to repeat.

With reference to the above five learning outcomes as expected, they are no different from what WFJLPS has always been claiming for. For examples, our School Motto emphasizes on nurturing students with: "Wisdom, Faith and Love"; and our School envisions that, "The School is an exemplary Learning Organisation wherein every member achieves one's best, whereas, our students as beacon of light, our teacher and staff as exemplary mentors and role models, and our school as a learning institution for all." Through these, we help students form their values systems and dispositions in relation to others. This leads to the formation of mind and the person!

To me, my vision towards quality education, therefore, is that all young people, whatever their personal difference and family backgrounds are, should take substantial periods of their education together under our sincere care. We should:

- overcome the huge and unfair divergence of experiences for pupils near the top or the bottom of the packing order;
- match the diversity of our provisions to the diverse needs of individual children;
- give all children equal access to the separate specialisms and expertise in the school;
- give pupils the best possible access to high quality staff;
- ensure that gifted pupils and youngsters with barriers to their learning come together and gain from the scarce expertise specialist staff;
- increase the curiosity and knowledge which comes from staff from various departments sharing opportunities for continuous professional development;
- take advantage of the progress in the learning technologies;
- increase the chances for any pupil in their individualized learning pathway;
- mix and bring together, at least for a time, pupils of both genders from different social, ethnic and religious backgrounds to learn, to engage in sport, the arts, citizenship about their future as international as well as regional citizens.

In such, boys and girls, from different faiths and family backgrounds are educated together for significant periods of their education life. They will know that they are specially and equally valued, whatever their

different intelligences or talents and backgrounds. They will know this because the school they attend is celebrating difference and has prepared to develop their potentials to their full, but at the same time equally values different intelligences and talents.

In relation to how school can deliver quality education, my perception is that a school is an agent, a work place where quality school education can take place. Things happening in school, such as the school organizational structure, management system, leadership, decision-making, curriculum and instruction, classroom learning atmosphere, interpersonal relationship, home-school relationship and even the school culture, etc., can all contribute to develop the quality outcome of school education (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Creemers & Reezigt, 1997; Dalin, 1994). To realize what characteristics that an effective quality school should include, I would suggest the following:

- there should be a congruent, clear and shared vision with explicit goals and aims in the school;
- the school should have developed a harmonious school climate and culture;
- the school should have high expectations on students, both academically and in terms of their behaviour, emphasizing the development of basic learning skills and placing students at the centre of learning;
- the school should put great emphasis on teaching and learning process and monitor closely how it can be conducted effectively meeting the individual need of the students;
- the school should have developed a systematic and structural working procedure or school plan, both long-term and short-term, and at the same time prioritized the necessary educational needs for the school;
- there is a strong and outstanding leadership of the principal who can motivate the staff in making participative decisions for the school. the principal is motivated, plays a more active, coordination and supportive role, is an instructional leader, works closely with teachers, encourages teachers and shares responsibility;
- the school should have a well-implemented, regular, relevant, comprehensive, practical and long-term staff development plan. The principal should take the lead in professional development and develop his/her sub-ordinates at their full potential;
- the principal, the teachers and even the supporting staff are all working collaboratively as a team. There is a team spirit in the school, teachers cooperate, student attitude towards the reform is positive and teachers help each other with instructional problems;
- the school can successfully solicit active external supports from parents, the education authority, the government and the community;
- the school can provide a favourable environment which can stimulate pleasurable learning so that both the teachers and students can be actively involved in the teaching and learning process;
- 'Success bleeds success'---the school experiences more success, more positive students, value-added performances, teacher cooperation, professional exchanges and extra resources.

As a school leader, the main concern is to create the necessary conditions to support and manage changes (Ainscow, 2005; Hopkins, 2001 & 2007); and at the same time to develop the capacities of the whole school to sustain the momentum of change. Leadership development, side by side with teacher development, is

crucial in bringing about authentic school improvement in schools. With these arrangements, it provides structures for supporting teachers in exploring their ideas and ways of working, whilst, at the same time, ensuring that maintenance arrangements are not sacrificed (Ainscow, 2005).

On one hand, the school needs to build an infrastructure and a professional learning community to well maintain what the school has been developing. On the other hand, the school should look for new opportunities to further develop and improve the core business of teaching and learning performances at all levels of the school (Chow, 2005). As a strategy, schools are likely to meet their purpose if:

- there is a common consensus towards the same school vision, mission and goals and a common language is created and shared among all stakeholders;
- a positive, task-oriented, active, sharing, open, caring, innovative, and participative behavioural norm can be established within the institution;
- there is great expectation on searching for excellence, aiming at self-improving and self-actualization atmosphere in the school;
- there is high concern on people and task from the senior management;
- an action plan for change is thoroughly thought through and supported by all;
- people at all levels are empowered, well informed, prepared, educated, developed, appraised, supported, respected and praised;
- it is a school-based whole school approach of change process under a purposeful leadership that is fairly distributed within the school;
- there is the existence of a systematic audit or self-review system that people are informed by evidence or data and have ownership in the change process;
- there is a strong home-school collaboration network and close cooperation with the community as well as the government;
- the change can be sustained and regarded as a school improvement journey, an on-going process with formative evaluations to support the implementation where quality assurance as well as quality improvement is the norm.

Quality school education is possible and its change process can be a success, subject to the acceptance and the support of all people involved in the school and the community. As a consequence, schools with shared vision, goal and values among members, high concern for both intrinsic and extrinsic needs of the people, high expectation and clear aims, quality and purposeful leadership, collaborative culture and a learning organization can increase productivity and promote high-involvement.

May I take this opportunity as a humble request: To seek your kind endorsement to join hand in hand with us to contribute in the life time of each of our WFJLPS students and make a difference for the betterment of them in the years to come? Your continuous support to us is always appreciated. Thank you and best regards to you all!



Alan P. Y. CHOW  
Principal

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