

REPORT ON YEAR THREE VISIT
to Shiquan, Shaanxi
2012-10-26 to 2012-11-02

Introduction

Under a three-year agreement of 2010 between Shaanxi Soong Ching Ling Foundation (SXSCLF) and Hong Kong Friends of Guangming Association (FGM) Hong Kong, a series of training and education programs was arranged for the teachers of their Shiquan municipality for three consecutive years for the betterment of counseling and psychological support to the Left-Behind Children (留守兒童) (LBC) in the municipality (i.e. students whose parents had left for the cities and outside provinces for work).

A party of three clinical psychologists from Hong Kong (comprising Eddie Li Kam-wah, Joseph Lau Kai-tai and Ingrid Mak Wing-fun) took up the project and visited Shiquan in 2010 and 2011. In the first year (2010), a two-day course was run on basic developmental psychology and management of emotional and behavioral problems in children. In the second year (2011), a more advanced two-day course was conducted to further equip the teachers with updated methods of behavioral analysis, to discuss difficult cases encountered by the teachers, to introduce small-group counseling formats for LBC of different developmental stages, and to encourage self-care and peer support amongst the counseling teachers. A visit was also paid to a primary school (Wujing Chunlei Hope Primary School) in the course of the training. Both courses were met with good success.

The 2012 Visit and Its Objectives

2012 was the third and final year of the training program. The party of three psychologists set the following objectives in the preparatory stage:

- (a) To review the progress from the teachers in the implementation of small group counseling, and in the behavioral management of more challenging cases introduced in the 2011 training;
- (b) To assist the teachers in setting up a peer support system; and to further empower those teachers with formal qualification in Psychology and counseling to form a Seed Group within the municipality for supporting others with little or lesser former training in these respects;
- (c) To introduce additional psychological material concerning parent-teacher cooperation, developing positive peer relationship and introducing positive psychology in the classroom.

Original Visit Plan and Subsequent Modification

A ten day visit to Shaanxi was originally planned between 2012-10-26 to 2012-11-04. For the first part (10-26 to 10-28), a delegation was to be led by Adelina Wong, Chairperson of the FGM and Dr. Chan Kim-kwong, Consultant together with the three psychologists, Selma Fong and Holly Ho of the Association for a three-day visit to Xi'an. Progress of the three-year project would be reviewed together with the SXSCFLF. For the second part (10-29 to 11-04), two courses would be run in Shiquan municipality : (1) a bolster two-day advanced course for teachers who attended training in the first two years and (2) another two-day basic course for teachers who had never attended similar training programs. A small Seed Group of formerly identified teachers would be asked to participate and assist in the basic course with an intention of adopting a model of training the trainers.

However, due to resource constraints caused by water floods earlier in the year in Shaanxi, the two-day basic course was not started. So the whole visit was cut short by two days, and ended on 2012-11-02 instead of 2012-11-04.

Arrival and Reception

The delegation of seven members arrived Xi'an in the afternoon of 2012-11-26 and was met at the airport by Mr. Su Ming and Mr. Fan Feng, Vice-chairman and Secretary of SXSCFLF respectively.

Forum at Soong Ching Ling Foundation at Shaanxi Normal University (2012-10-27)

A forum was organized by the SXSCFLF on 2012-10-27 at the Shaanxi Normal University. It was chaired by Mr. Wun Wei Ju, Vice Chairman of the Foundation, and attended by Mr. Su Ming, Mr. Fan Feng, Ms. He Xia - Municipal Chairperson of the Women's Federation in Shiquan, Ms. Xia Yuqin of LBC Education Centre of Shiquan, two professors of the Shaanxi Normal University and the seven members of the Hong Kong delegation.

The following were the main points discussed during the forum:

- There had been significant improvement in the quality of education and psychological support to LBC in Shiquan in the past three years. More resources had also been directed towards improving the establishment and remuneration of the counseling teachers as well as the publication of relevant educational material,
- There had been increased interest and awareness amongst the teachers on the importance of

counseling and psychological support to LBC. The contribution from the two years of teaching program by psychologists from Hong Kong had been considered very useful,

- There had however been a recent shift in the national educational policy on LBC as well as in the service priority of the SXSCFL. While the welfare of LBC would continue to gain prime attention in the national educational policy, this group of school children would not be singled out. Their welfare would be treated as equally important as other school children to avoid effects of stigmatization. Also more attention had also been drawn to the welfare of a large population of Liu Dong Er Tong (流動兒童) – children who followed their parents to work in the cities and outside provinces. Furthermore, due to resource constraints, the service priority of the SXSCFL would be more channelized to pre-primary education as well as relief of serious poverty in the relatively remote areas of the Shaanxi province.
- The continuous support of the FGM would be appreciated. The possibility of sending a study team from Shiquan to Hong Kong was also mentioned. It was however noted that even within Shaanxi province, interest for developing quality education and counseling to LBC varied from municipality to municipality. So it would take time to activate interests from those regions that lagged behind. The two professors of Shaanxi Normal University also mentioned their capacity of sending teaching staff to Shiquan to further train up their teachers.

Dinner Reception for the FGM Delegates (2012-10-27)

A dinner reception hosted by Chairman Mou Lingsheng (牟玲生) of the SXSCFL was held in the evening of 2012-10-27. Souvenirs were distributed to Chairperson Adelina Wong and other delegates of the FGM, with gratitude expressed for the contribution by the Association in the past three years.

Meeting with Three “Seed Teachers” in Shiquan (2012-10-28)

The party of three psychologists set off for Shiquan in the morning of 2012-10-28, accompanied by Mr. Su Ming and Mr. Fan Feng. A pre-dinner meeting in the same evening was arranged with three seed teachers who showed good performance in the previous courses. Expectations of the bolster advanced course were discussed. They particularly requested further coverage on stress management of the teachers, case discussion on the more challenging cases as well as the further application of small group counseling.

The 2012 Training Course (2012-10-29 to 2012-10-30):

Venue and Facilities

The two-day lecturing was conducted at Quanxi No. 2 Primary School, the same venue as used in 2011. It was centrally located in the municipality of Shiquan. The lecture room was spacious and accommodated up to 150 students. Facilities included computer and projector, writing board, and wireless microphones.

Opening Ceremony of the Training Course

The course started with an Opening Ceremony on 2012-10-29 with welcome speeches delivered by Vice-Chairman Mr. Su Ming, Chairperson He Xia, Secretary Fan and Ms. Xia. Eddie Li also expressed thanks to the SXSCLF on behalf of the delegation of psychologists.

Run-down of the Training Program

The run-down of the training program was as follows:

Date	Time	Topic	Psychologist
2012-10-29	AM	Review of the work in the Past Year by the Teachers	LAU, LI & MAK
		Live Demonstration on the Use of Small Group Counseling by two Teachers (a) on Conflict Management and (b) on Stress Management	Teachers from Shiquan LAU, LI & MAK
	PM	Case Management	LAU, LI & MAK
		Parent Teacher Collaboration	LAU
2012-10-30	AM	Review of Day One Training Q & A	LAU, LI & MAK
		Positive Psychology in the Classroom Self-care and Stress Management in Teachers	LI
	PM	Developing Positive Peer Relationship	MAK
		Concluding Remarks and Recommendations	LAU, LI & MAK
		Tree Planting Ceremony	LAU, LI & MAK
		Closing ceremony and Prize Giving for 10 Outstanding Teachers	Presided by Vice-Chairman Su and Chairperson He

Day 1 (2012-10-29)

The party started off Day 1 by hearing progress from teachers in the past year. There had been considerable interest in small group counseling taught last year, and yet various constraints were encountered during its implementation. Hence, in their report of progress, some teachers raised several challenging cases encountered in the past year.

The course was attended by 60 teachers, about half of them had attended previous training. Of note this year was a group of Assistant Headmasters who took charge of ethics and discipline in their schools in Shiquan. They were in fact key persons taking care of the welfare and counseling of the LBC and other students in the municipality.

Two teachers conducted two separate live demonstrations in the use of small group counseling for some 40 primary students. The first one focused on Conflict Management and the second one was on Stress Management. In both demonstrations, the teachers self-developed teaching material and video clips on their own initiative. Students were actively asked to participate and voice their views on solving difficult interpersonal situations, so that they could gain insights about the complexity of conflict situations. It was also noted that ready made text books on Ethics (德育) were available in the curriculum of the students, and these materials, though some of them being rather dogmatic, would be good starting points for discussion in small group counseling sessions. Students seemed to have enjoyed the sessions.





In the afternoon of Day 1, the party gave a wash-up to the two live demonstrations. Teachers were being empowered to try the modality of small group counseling to supplement classroom teaching in textbook knowledge, and for better attention to the developmental issues of the students.

Joseph Lau then spoke in depth about the different aspects of Teacher Parent Collaboration. This was an area only sparingly covered in the previous courses, but this was definitely a main-stream emphasis in educational programs in all developed countries. In recent years, educational authorities in Mainland had emphasized on the need for enhanced communication amongst the teachers, the students, the parents, the guardians, and members of the Women's Federation on a regular basis to ensure the healthy development of LBC and other students. Concepts such as Schools for Parents (seminars) were introduced, so that parents could be more informed and involved in the education of their children. In the past year, teachers were encouraged to pay home visits to every student under their care (大家访) in order to enhance the teacher parent relationship. Joseph Lau also pointed out that in more developed countries, parents were frequently asked to participate in decision making of various school policies. Parents and teachers were encouraged to respect their complementary role in the education of the students. In this way, parents would not just shift the sole responsibility of educating the students to the teachers. Alternatively, teachers would recognize that although many parents had only limited educational background, they were key persons in the healthy development of the children.

Day 2 (2012-10-30)

Eddie Li used Day Two to introduce the concept of Positive Psychology, and how it had been researched and applied in schools in developed countries with encouraging results. It would help create a positive learning atmosphere, and bolster self-confidence in students. Teachers could also apply the concepts in Positive Psychology towards themselves for maintaining their morale and for their own stress management. Eddie Li gave acknowledgement that teaching was in fact a very stressful job, and the job of teachers was often not fully recognized. The United Nations had put October 5th of every year to be the World Teachers Day, highlighting the need to empowering and giving recognition to teachers across the world.

Ingrid Mak talked on Developing Positive Peer Relationship in the afternoon. She quoted a famous example from a headmaster in Hong Kong who felt that facilities in schools were much less important for promoting learning than good relationship with teachers and with fellow students. He felt that when students were being treasured by teachers, there would be good motivation in learning. Ingrid Mak introduced good qualities found in teachers - who talk more to students, teach them good manners, nurture their sense of responsibility, reinforce positive behaviors and be able to walk the talk. Students could actually be taught on how to enhance relationship with peers. The session ended with several case examples for discussion.

Upon the completion of the two-day course, a tree planting ceremony was held in the campus of the school. Each psychologist planted a tree to commemorate the three years of cooperation between SXSCLF and FGM. After the tree-planting, a closing ceremony was held and was presided by Vice-Chairman Su Ming. 10 teachers who had outstanding results in the training courses in the past two years were awarded.





Photo Taken with Vice Chairman Mr. Su Ming and officials of Shiquan Municipality

Post Course Visit

After the training course, a visit was made to Centre Primary School of Yundou Town. Visits were also paid to two students who lived in the villages nearby.



One case was a girl whose mother had left the family, and the father had to take care of elderly grandparent and a mentally handicapped brother. The other was a boy whose father was in prison

subsequent to an industrial accident.



Conclusion

The three year training program was completed after this visit. The party of three psychologists from Hong Kong was very glad about the development of education and counseling for LBC in Shiquan, with more attention and resources directed to the betterment of the remuneration and

training of the teachers. It was noted that the national educational policy had evolved over the years, but Shiquan had in fact been running in the forefront to directly address many of the educational and developmental issues faced by the LBC. It had been a most fruitful experience for the trainers.



Beautiful Shiquan in Night Time 2012