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**Symposium: Integrated arts education: a comparative study in Mainland,  
Hong Kong and Taiwan**  
**Integrated Arts Education in Taiwan**

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In order to prepare our students with the necessary qualities and capabilities for the new millennium, and to keep up the global trends of educational reform, the Ministry of Education initiated curricular reforms in the compulsory education in Taiwan. The development of a new curriculum began in 1997, it covered three stages, and each stage had to accomplish a certain number of tasks. Before the Grade 1-9 Curriculum was announced in 2002, the Ministry conducted experiments from 1999 to 2001 at elementary and junior high schools, 311 schools involved. The experiments focused on school-based curriculum development and integrated teaching approaches. After the Review Committee on Revision and Formulation of Elementary and Junior High School Curriculum reviewed and confirmed the adequacy of the curriculum guidelines, the Ministry announced the schedule for implementing the new curriculum which began in fall of 2001 at the first grade, in addition, English courses for grade 5 and 6 were implemented at the same school year. The entire school program was changed to the new curriculum in the fall of 2004. This paper will report the Grade 1-9 Curriculum, the integrated arts curriculum, process of the implementation, teacher in-service programs, music textbook publications, and the evaluation of integrated arts curriculum. The arts curriculum will be discussed as an integrated program, but only the music curriculum will be reported in detail since the researcher is involved in the music discipline of the integrated arts curriculum reform.

### **The Grade 1-9 Curriculum**

The Grade 1-9 curriculum was developed for the compulsory education in Taiwan that is to teach students to gain basic knowledge and to develop the capacity for lifelong learning. The new curriculum ensures consistency in the nine-year compulsory education structure that consists of six years of elementary school and three years of junior high schools. The goals of the new curriculum are the following:

- (1) To enhance self-understanding and explore individual potential;
- (2) To develop creativity and the ability to appreciate beauty and present one's own talents;
- (3) To promote abilities related to career planning and lifelong learning;
- (4) To cultivate knowledge and skills related to expression, communication, and sharing;
- (5) To learn to respect others, care for the community, and facilitate team work;

- (6) To further cultural learning and international understanding;
- (7) To strengthen knowledge and skills related to planning, organizing, and their implementation;
- (8) To acquire the ability to utilize technology and information;
- (9) To encourage the attitude of active learning and studying; and
- (10) To develop abilities related to independent thinking and problem solving (Ministry of Education, 2001, 2003).

Based on the goals of the new curriculum, ten core competences which a modern citizen should possess were set for the students from grade 1 through grade 9. In order to foster core competences in citizens, the new curriculum encompasses seven major learning areas replace the traditional subjects in elementary school and junior high school. These learning areas include Language Arts, Health and Physical Education, Social Studies, Arts and Humanities, Mathematics, Science and Technology, and Integrative Activities. A learning area refers to the content of learning, not the title of different subjects; the implementation of learning areas in school will follow the principle of integration and adopt teaching approaches. To simplify the curriculum at first and second grade level that three learning areas including Social Studies, Arts and Humanities, Science and Technology are combined as a new course, so called Life Curriculum. This means that there are only five learning areas for the lower level grade. Unlike the traditional curriculum standards, the new curriculum only provides guidelines for each of the learning areas, not detailed course content. The new curriculum also covers important modern societal issues, such as gender, environmental education, information technology, home economics, human rights, and career development. Each of these issues is provided a curriculum guideline that integrates them with the seven learning areas. It is expected that students will be able to grasp the changes and the reality of society in order to become good citizens.

### **The Arts and Humanities Learning Area – Integrated Arts Curriculum**

The Arts and Humanities learning area includes the instruction of music, visual art, and performing art; performing art is interpreted as drama mostly, and sometimes both drama and dance. The goals of this learning area are to enable student to gain the skills and knowledge of exploration and expression, aesthetics and comprehension, experience and application. The curriculum guideline focuses on the differentiation and development of students' abilities by grades based on three components of each art discipline. Four stages of competence indicators are designed to reflect the abilities that students should have acquired upon completing grades 2, 4, 6, and 9. Music teachers are expected to transform these competence indicators to course contents, because music teaching categories and contents are not included in the guidelines. Integration and team teaching approaches are emphasized

that means music teaching is integrated with visual art and drama, and music specialist is teamed with specialists of other subjects if necessary.

The teaching periods of each learning area are different and flexible; decision of the teaching periods is made by the Committee of School Curriculum Development of each school. The curriculum guidelines only provide the total learning periods for each grade level, for example, 30-33 learning periods per week for the sixth grade, each period is 40 minutes long, and 32-34 learning periods per week for the seventh grade, each period is 45 minutes long. The percentage of total teaching periods for each learning area is also indicated; Arts and Humanities learning area takes 10% to 15% of the total teaching period for each grade (Ministry of Education, 2001, 2003), e.g. 3-5 learning periods per week for the sixth grade.

The curriculum guideline of Arts and Humanities learning area are totally different from the Music curriculum standards in the past; music specialist is classified as arts and humanities specialist with music specialty. In order to be certified as an arts and humanities specialists, 12 credited hours additional requirements which contain courses in curriculum integration, visual art and drama etc. are added for the music teaching certification programs. Some empowerment courses and workshops are offered to help current music specialists to upgrade their teaching techniques for the new curriculum. The Ministry of Education has required all teachers to receive at least 30 hours of training program by the year 2004 to promote the teaching of new curriculum.

### **The Arts and Humanities Textbooks—Music Textbooks**

All Arts and Humanities textbooks are reviewed and approved by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation. Arts and Humanities textbooks are published for used in Grade 3 to 6 at elementary school, and Grades 7 to 10. There are four to five companies have published Arts and Humanities textbooks, three of them published textbooks for all grades, others only chose to publish either the elementary school level or junior high school level textbooks. A thematic approach is used to compile the textbooks which contain three to five chosen themes and develop a thematic unit of music, visual art and drama. Themes are taken from daily life subjects like family, school, neighborhood, park, season, love, mask, and traditional customs. Music content is connected to the theme and is not based on music concepts and fundamentals. According to the new curriculum guidelines, the basic concepts of music are expected to be taught by the arts and humanities specialist whom with music specialty. Much of the music materials integrated are for music appreciation, a sequential learning of music concepts and skills are totally abandoned. A large number of music selections are Taiwanese folk songs, music by contemporary Taiwanese composers, and music played by local musicians. Each of these textbooks came out in a big volume, because

it covers three parts, but counts music materials itself, the content and difficulty level have reduced a great deal. The Life Curriculum textbooks for the first and second grades include very little music materials, usually a few children's rhymes and songs related to the theme of the units.

### **The Implementation of the New Curriculum**

After the experimental period of the new curriculum in 1999-2001, the Ministry of Education proposed a four-year schedule of implementation starting with the school year 2001. A school year (SY) in Taiwan begins in August of the year and ends in July of next year. The following schedule (Table 1) indicates not only the implementation of new curriculum, but also the beginning of English course that was a major change of the elementary school curriculum, because English subject was first time offered at elementary school level.

Table 1: *Four-year schedule of implementation*

School Year	Grade level for new curriculum	Grade level for English course
SY2001	Grade 1	Grade 5
SY2002	Grades 1, 2, 4, 7	Grades 5, 6
SY2003	Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8	Same as above
SY2004	Grades 1 to 9	Same as above

Entire program of compulsory education has changed to the Grade 1-9 Curriculum since August 2004. The four-year schedule allowed teachers to learn about the new curriculum and integrated curriculum design; it also enabled the publishers to compile the integrated arts textbooks, and the school administrators to adjust the class schedule.

Many research projects, conferences, and workshops were funded by the government since the beginning of the curriculum reform. The Ministry of Education also sponsored several web-sites to help teachers, such as "Literature and Arts" (<http://arts.edu.tw>). A supervisor system was established by the Ministry that included college professors and experienced arts teachers who could help local schools to implementing the integrated arts program. The supervisor system sent out member to review school's curriculum and help them to solve problems. Because the school teachers are demanding for the model of integrated arts lesson plans, many workshops on integrated lesson plan writing and contest of integrated lesson plans were held. The integrated lesson plans contest is held each year by educational institutes, many of the winner lesson plans collections are published. In addition, many articles and books on Arts and Humanities learning area have been published. The purpose of these programs and publications is to help teachers understand the what, why,

and how of the integrated arts curriculum.

The shortage of drama teachers were obvious, because there was no institution offered drama education program when the new curriculum just started, music and art teachers are often asked to teach the drama part. Some of the music teachers would apply Orff approach or Jaques-Dalcroze method to teach movement, and to substitute the drama part. In less than ten years, some drama teachers and dance teachers have received certification and teach in schools. Besides, a few universities also established the degree program on the “Arts and Humanities” in response to the new curriculum.

### **The Challenges of the New Curriculum**

The integrated curriculum is a major change in our schools, and it is also a new concept for most school teachers, including music teachers. Traditionally, music has always been taught as an individual course. Classroom teacher or music specialist teaches music at the elementary school level, and only specialist teaches music at junior high school. Music textbooks contain the materials in the categories of theory, music reading, singing, composition, instrument playing and appreciation according to the music curriculum standards. At the beginning of implementation of the new curriculum, music teachers had to face the following challenges: 1) music is integrated with visual art and drama as a learning area, it is no longer a separated subject; 2) curriculum guideline provides only competence indicators, music teachers are expected to transform them into course contents; 3) new curriculum promotes school-based curriculum, the Committee of School Curriculum Development of each school will structure school curriculum and teaching periods for each learning area; 4) Arts and Humanities textbooks integrated materials of music, visual art and drama, music teachers are expected to plan their lessons not depends on the textbooks; 5) instruction time for the Arts and Humanities is less than the music and art subjects in the past, music teachers have problem to keep up students music learning outcomes; 6) music teaching is expected to cover the important societal issues that indicated in the curriculum guidelines (Lai, 2001). The Ministry of Education works closely with schools on implementing the new curriculum. Through the supervisor system, publications and training courses, most teachers are able to overcome the difficulties and frustrations.

### **Evaluation of the Arts and Humanities Learning Area**

Is it time to evaluate students' achievement? The achievement tests have been developed for five learning areas of the Grade 1-9 Curriculum, except the learning areas of Arts and Humanities, and Health and Physical Education. To establish the achievement standards for the Arts and Humanities learning area, the Ministry proposed the Sixth and Ninth Grade Arts and Humanities Literacy Benchmarks in 2005, and a project to construct a

national assessment of Arts and Humanities is undertaken in 2006. Assessment has replaced the integrated lesson plan became the most concerned issue of the new curriculum.

To evaluate the current practices in the Arts and Humanities curriculum, a survey was done by the preparatory office of National Academy for Educational research in 2005. A questionnaire was designed to collect teacher's opinions on the curriculum guidelines, textbooks, teaching practice, and effectiveness of the integrated arts curriculum. Questionnaires were sent to 262 experienced Arts and Humanities specialist and 178 responses were received. There are 70.8% of the teachers indicated that the curriculum guidelines are appropriated and only 24.7% of them disagreed with the curriculum guidelines. Over seventy percent (74.1%) of the teachers are positive of the clarity of the goals of the curriculum, but many of them are questioned about competence indicators.

More than half of the respondents did not agree to take the textbooks as major teaching source and most of the teachers (91%) prepare their own teaching materials. Arts and Humanities is taught by music, art and drama specialists in most of the schools (72.5%), and only very few schools assigned one teacher in charge of whole curriculum. There is ten percent of the teachers team teaching with teachers from other learning areas, whenever the theme of the curriculum required a music or art teacher. There are 65.7% teachers indicates that students have reached the goals of the curriculum, especially goal of aesthetics and comprehension. The results have shown some status after four years of implementation.

### **Conclusion**

The practice and research in integrated music education has received highly attention in the international music education conferences lately. The Arts and Humanities curriculum in Taiwan has enabled music teachers to foster the student's music skills, starting from everyday life experiences, combining textbook knowledge, and arranging music activities around it. We are proud to make the integrated curriculum to a national policy. The curriculum implementation of the Grade 1-9 Curriculum is a long process, it will mark the tenth anniversary next year. The focus has moved to the assessment of the integrated curriculum and it will continue to progress.

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