Chapter 3
Curriculum Planning
3.1 A Balanced Curriculum

PSHE plays a significant role in students' whole-person development. It is also the entitlement of every student. Students should be introduced to the different perspectives provided by the six strands of the PSHE framework, namely: personal and social development, time, continuity and change, culture and heritage, place and environment, resources and economic activities, social system and citizenship through appropriate PSHE learning activities. In view of this, schools should develop a curriculum policy to ensure that all the necessary resources (time allocation, human and financial resources, etc.) are provided for a balanced curriculum, of which PSHE is an integral part.

3.2 Connecting School-based Curriculum Development to Central Curriculum

3.2.1 Principles for school-based curriculum adaptation (Please refer to Booklet 1, Basic Education Curriculum Guide - Building on Strengths (2002).)

- The PSHE KLA Curriculum Guide is one among other KLA Guides prepared by CDC to set the direction of curriculum development for the learning & teaching of PSHE from Primary 1 to Secondary 3. It provides a central curriculum in the form of an open & flexible framework with learning targets and objectives, and essential contents. Schools are expected to fulfil the basic requirements spelt out in the Guide to ensure that students receive their entitlement to the same learning opportunities. The Guide, however, is not a prescribed syllabus to be taught uniformly to all schools & students, as it is well understood that the concept of "one-size fits all" does not work.

- Each school, with its unique characteristics of teachers and students, should attempt to adapt the central curriculum by varying the organization of contents, contexts, learning and teaching strategies, and criteria and modes of assessment to help their students achieve the learning targets.
• It has been made clear in *Learning to Learn - The Way Forward in Curriculum Development* (2001) (p.69) that school-based curriculum development is **NOT**
  - deletion of subject content,
  - compilation of school-based curriculum package,
  - teachers working alone.

• Curriculum development is an on-going process. In school-based curriculum development for PSHE, school should:
  - follow direction and learning targets set out in this Guide,
  - help students achieve learning targets,
  - ensure the core elements set out in this Guide are covered,
  - build on strengths of schools and needs of students,
  - adopt appropriate curriculum and subject organizations, learning, teaching and assessment strategies,
  - encourage the professional development of teachers and collaboration with other stakeholders, and
  - reflect and improve based on informed practice.

• Furthermore, it should be noted that a school-based curriculum should be the outcome of the balance between guidance from the CDC and the autonomy of the school. The balance is subject to change over time, as the social context, students' needs and therefore school policy and decision change.

3.2.2 Setting the scene - Research and development (R&D) projects

• In order to generate knowledge about curriculum organization and design, learning and teaching strategies and different assessment modes, CDI, in collaboration with a number of "seed" schools, is conducting research and development projects to explore the ways to realize the aims and learning objectives of PSHE. These projects include the development of alternative modes of curriculum organization at junior
secondary level, through for example IH, History and Culture, and project learning connecting PSHE learning elements. A brief description of these projects can be found in Appendices 2 to 4.

• Through the process of conducting R&D projects, school heads and teachers can review their curriculum and their students' learning needs, and develop plans and strategies to improve students' learning. By referring to the informed practices and knowledge generated from these projects, teachers can develop themselves professionally. The findings of these projects will be disseminated through various means.

3.2.3 School-based adaptation of the central curriculum

The following steps can be used by schools setting out on school-based curriculum development at subject/ KLA level. Please refer to 1.7, Booklet 1, Basic Education Curriculum Guide - Building on Strengths (2002) for more suggestions.

Choosing a starting point to work on

• Reflect on the valuable experiences or good practices that the school may have developed in the past, e.g. a school-based curriculum project which raised students' interest in heritage studies, a successful community service programme organized, etc.
• Consider your expectations, existing resources and structures based on the above experience.
• Define the scale of change the school is ready to make: it may be as small as revising a curriculum unit, or a medium-scale cross-subject project to link up related themes in PSHE subjects, or as large as introducing a new assessment policy for the KLA in the school.
Setting goals

- Identify the needs of students and teachers as well as the possibilities of development in your present selected project.
- Generate some options and weigh their pros and cons from the perspectives of students, teachers, the school and parents.
- Select the best option and refine the goals in view of what the school would like to achieve.
- Formulate the goals of what teachers need to learn or will learn in this project.

Developing a step-by-step plan

- Develop strategies taking into consideration facilitating factors as well as obstacles.
- Make best use of the facilitating factors, such as the expertise of teachers, community resources and support available in developing and implementing the plan.
- Consider limitations, seek support from different sources and develop resolutions for overcoming the obstacles.
- Build up a project team and provide them with the necessary support, such as creating 'space' for planning and collaboration, change in the school timetable to bring in special learning activities, etc.
- Draw up a time schedule for the project and assign the right persons for various tasks.
Introducing an Integrated Project Curriculum

Based on previous experiences in organizing project learning, especially its participation in the "Accelerated Schools for Quality Education" (ASQE) Project organized by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Pentecostal Lam Hon Kwong School attempted to use project learning as the key learning strategy to organize a large-scale integrated curriculum comprising several areas of PSHE and computer literacy. This important curriculum decision was the result of reaching a consensus among all teaching staff, achieved through extensive discussion at different levels of meeting and staff development day. The school had prepared teachers for the change by organizing various visits to schools in Hong Kong and other parts of China to study their experiences of project learning and curriculum integration. The school has also set up a project team, allocated extra manpower, and devised a mechanism to liaise across the various subjects involved in project learning. The curriculum will be implemented in September 2002 progressively from S1 to S3. For details, please refer to Exemplar 7.

3.2.4 From short-term to medium-term planning

There is a need for the school to make school-based adaptation of the central curriculum for the KLA from now to 2005-06. Figure 2 on p.87 is a diagrammatic representation of how schools can conduct a situational analysis and arrive at a curriculum decision. A brief description is provided below:

- The school evaluates its present position with regard to curriculum development in the three dimensions of (i) mode of curriculum organization, (ii) mode of learning and teaching and (iii) mode of assessment by checking against the overarching aim, learning targets, learning objectives and essential learning contexts proposed in the PSHE framework.
• Strengths in any or all of the three dimensions mentioned above are recognized for further enhancement. Any inadequacies or weaknesses identified form the basis for consideration of alternative modes or strategies in that particular dimension.

• Identify alternative approaches or strategies and weigh them up against the situation and environment of the school as well as the changes that can be made in different areas.

• Decide on the approach or strategy that best suits the school, work out the short-term and long-term goals to be achieved and plan actions that will lead in the right direction.
Figure 2  Situational Analysis and the Curriculum Decision Process
(a brief description of this decision process is in 3.2.4)
3.3 Cross KLA Links

The PSHE KLA can be connected to other KLAs in various ways, either through drawing on their knowledge areas, processes and skills to enrich PSHE learning, or contributing to the achievement of students' learning outcomes in other KLAs. Obvious examples of links of PSHE with other KLAs include: personal and social issues related to different KLAs, the historical, social and cultural background of themes/issues in KLAs, the concern for people-environment relationships and citizenship education in different KLA contexts. They provide a basis for collaboration with other KLAs in the organization of learning activities and studies of an integrated nature.

The following table provides an idea of some of the personal and social issues for discussion and enquiry in other KLAs:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Key Learning Areas</th>
<th>Suggested issues for discussions and enquiries</th>
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| Chinese Language   | • Cultural affiliation, national identity and Chinese language education  
 |                    | • Should Putonghua replace Cantonese as the medium of instruction in Chinese language education in Hong Kong? |
| English Language   | • Intercultural and cross-cultural experiences in English language education  
 |                    | • Is English language the necessary path to globalisation? |
| Mathematics        | • The use and misuse of statistics  
 |                    | • Is mathematics value-free? |
| Science            | • Scientific investigation and ethical considerations  
 |                    | • How scientific is our approach to daily problems? |
| Technology         | • Technology for people and people for technology  
 |                    | • Is technology gender biased? |
| Arts               | • Development of individuality and arts education  
 |                    | • Should artistic expression observe moral boundaries? |
| Physical Education | • Knowing one's own biological clock  
 |                    | • Can physical exercises be a therapy? |
3.4 Time Allocation

- Conventionally, schools operate a timetable with a 40-period week or 48-period six-day cycle, with 35 to 40 minutes for each period. For most S1-3 PSHE subjects, the recommended time allocation is 2 periods per week or 3 periods per six-day cycle. Thus, these PSHE subjects would make up 15% to 20% of the overall curriculum time. (Please refer to 2.3.3, Booklet 2, Basic Education Curriculum Guide - Building on Strengths (2002) for suggested time allocation for each KLA.)

- Some schools find that this has posed the problem of subject over-crowdedness at junior secondary level. Many S1-3 students have to study fifteen to seventeen subjects, and among these subjects, four to five are in the PSHE KLA. Teachers teaching PSHE subjects in the lower form have found it difficult even to remember the names and faces of their students because they just met their students infrequently.

- Flexible use of learning time by alternative timetabling arrangements: (Please see 2.3.4, Booklet 2, Basic Education Curriculum Guide - Building on Strengths (2002) for the principles.)
  - Instead of having 4 PSHE subjects in a year, each with two 40-minute periods per week/cycle, some schools are now offering 2 PSHE subjects in one term, 2 other PSHE subjects in the other term, each with four 40-minute periods per week/cycle. This can reduce the number of subjects a student has to manage each term, and the number of subject teachers he/she has to adjust to. This also increases the contact between the teacher and the students (from 2 periods per week to 4 periods per week), and therefore provide more opportunities to develop trust - a necessary condition for the development of critical thinking skills and creativity, and for the nurturing of or self-esteem and motivation in learning.
Pairing up two PSHE Subjects in the timetable

A school pairs up the timetables of the classes in junior forms for History and Geography and their respective subject teachers. Each class either studies History in the first term and Geography in the second, or vice versa. The number of subjects each student has to tackle for each term is thereby reduced and the contact time between students and their subject teacher is increased. For details, please refer to Exemplar 8.

One school sets aside Friday afternoons for project learning, life-wide learning (mainly for museum visits, field studies and community services), homework guidance, and etc. Though the formal lesson time allocated to PSHE subjects each week may not meet the recommendation, that is compensated for by the time set aside on Friday afternoons. With a well-coordinated curriculum design, students are exposed to a range of learning experiences in PSHE. (For details, please refer to the case supplied by Chinese YMCA Secondary School in Exemplar 9 and the "Exemplars for Secondary Schools: Secondary Schools 1" in Booklet 2, Basic Education Curriculum Guide - Building on Strengths (2002).)