

Library Projects and the Basic Law: The Experience of Lam Tin Methodist Primary School Library

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Abstract:

The Basic Law of Hong Kong came into effect on July 1, 1997 when sovereignty over Hong Kong was transferred from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China. Under the principles of "One Country, Two Systems" and "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong", Hong Kong would continue its capitalist system and way of life for 50 years after 1997 in order to realize the peaceful reunification of the country.

Under the effects of digital transformation era, school libraries have shifted the geographical coverage of library advocacy from physical to virtual and from local to national perspectives. The purpose of this paper is to outline the initiative of Lam Tin Methodist Primary School in the promotion of the Basic Law. It will describe how library historical and genealogical collections, online resources, E-resources, videos, Google Sites and library on-site workshops articulate a series of library cross-curricular programs which inform students and teachers the history of the handover and the close relationship between Hong Kong and China from the stories of heritage sights and monuments through project learning. The message from these innovative programs fosters a sense of belonging and national identity in addition to strengthening Hong Kong's own unique cultural legacy. One of the cross-curricular programs, "Treasure Hunt in Hong Kong", won the Outstanding Project Award from the Hong Kong Education Department's School-based Curriculum Project Scheme.

Keywords: Hong Kong, Basic Law, Hong Kong handover, Lam Tin Methodist Primary School.

1. A Brief History of Hong Kong

Hong Kong is located at the mouth of the Pearl River Delta in the south of China. Its geography mainly consists of three regions: the Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories. The 30-square-mile Hong Kong Island was ceded to the British under the Treaty of Nanking that ended the First Opium War (1839-1842) between Great Britain and China's last dynasty, the Qing dynasty in 1841. The terms of the treaty transformed Hong Kong from a small fishing village into an international trade port. Following the unequal treaty, Kowloon was ceded to the British in addition to the New Territories was leased to the British for 99 years at the end of the Second Opium War (1856-1860). From then onwards, Hong Kong became a British colony. It was not until 1997 that China resumed its sovereignty over Hong Kong. Hong Kong has since become a special administration region (SAR) of the Peoples Republic of China.

The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (The Basic Law) came into effect right after the handover on July 1, 1997. “The Hong Kong Basic Law is the highest law with practical effect in Hong Kong. The Basic Law is a constitutional document for the HKSAR. It enshrines the important principles of ‘One Country, Two Systems’, ‘Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong’ and a high degree of autonomy” (Information Services Department, HKSAR, 2015). It sets out a clear framework for Hong Kong’s system of government, including the operation of the judiciary in addition to the rights and freedom enjoyed by Hong Kong residents (Gittings, 2013). July 1, 2017 marks the 20th anniversary of the HKSAR establishment. Over the past two decades, the Basic Law is highly cherished by the population. The Hong Kong society puts both “One Country, Two Systems” and “Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong” principles into operation for its effective running.

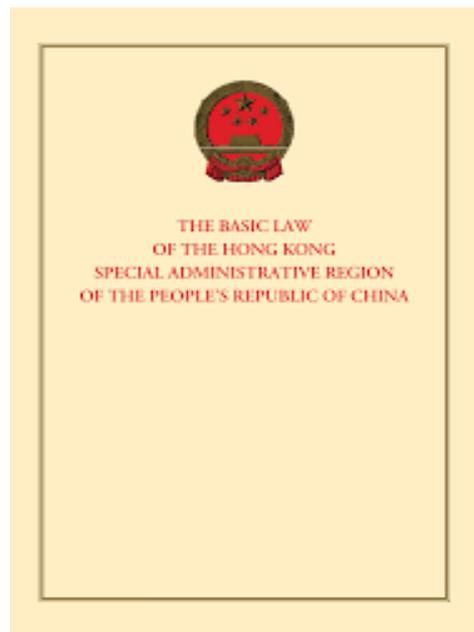


Figure 1. The Basic Law of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
(Source: Basic Law of Hong Kong, 2017)

2. School Library Services Meeting the Curriculum Needs for the Post-Millennial Generation

After ending the 156 years of British colonial rule, all key milestones of Hong Kong’s history have become part of the General Studies Curriculum for the Primary Five Students. Many students, especially those born after 1997, lack the sense of belonging to China. Young children have difficulties in understanding the meaning behind the historical events and could not fully appreciate the thinking behind the design of the Basic Law, which in turn, affect their learning motivation and learning performance over General Studies at school. As a Teacher-Librarian and a General Studies Teacher, I fully understand that the library services and resources can facilitate student learning through engaging activities. I initiated some collaborative library projects with different subject teachers to motivate the students’ learning interest over the history of Hong Kong through activities such as history book talk, history book exhibition, history book recommendation to all school students and teachers in morning assemblies. My target groups were not limited to Primary Five students, but also to other levels. The systematic inquiry-based project, “Treasure Hunt in Hong Kong” of 2001, targeted for approximately 180 Primary Three students, created the most impressive impact. The study of the History of Hong Kong has become a topic of students’ project learning each year from then on.

3. A Brief Summary of the Award-Bearing Project - “Treasure Hunt in Hong Kong”

The cross-curricular collaborative project, “Treasure Hunt in Hong Kong”, was subsidized by the School-Based Curriculum Project Scheme 2001-2002 of the Education Department of Hong Kong (which is now renamed as the Education Bureau). The project aimed to help students:

- (1) Learn more about the historical sites of Hong Kong;
- (2) Apply information literacy skills in inquiry-based learning;
- (3) Respect the culture of Hong Kong and preserve different monuments;
- (4) Increase their understanding of the close relationship between Hong Kong and China;
- (5) Build up a sense of belonging to China.

All these aims fit the learning needs of the students in their Primary Three General Studies Curriculum. This project was implemented through a multi-layer format. In the aspect of cognitive learning, through resource-based learning and student-centred inquiry activities, students were stimulated to actively participate in related historical research. Their understanding of different Hong Kong historical sites and their national identity were enhanced. In the terms of generic skills development, information literacy skills were integrated into students’ project learning through Collaborative Learning and Teaching. As for assessment practices, other than teacher assessment, peer assessment and parent assessment were employed to reflect the whole picture of students’ learning from different dimensions. The project received the “Outstanding Project Award” from the Advisory Committee of the School-Based Curriculum Project Scheme of the Education Department.

4. Understanding Hong Kong from Local History and Genealogy

Students were guided to respect the unique culture and historical development of Hong Kong, so as to enhance their sense of belonging to the SAR and to China in this collaborative project. Diversified educational programs were provided such as Historical and Genealogical Collections Exhibition, monument tours of the heritage trails in three regions of Hong Kong, information literacy skills workshops, etc. In addition, the staff of the Hong Kong Museum of History was invited to deliver a talk at school. They shared with students many interesting stories of the ancient historic events in Hong Kong. All these activities articulated a clear picture in the students’ mind that Hong Kong is an indivisible part of China.



Figure 2. Hong Kong Museum of History Visit

5. Synergistic Impact from the Teacher-Librarian and Subject Teachers Collaboration

In this cross-curricular project, the Teacher-Librarian worked closely with the General Studies Teachers. Being its project coordinator, the Teacher-Librarian oversaw each stage of the project implementation closely. In addition, students learned information literacy skills in school library lessons under the guidance of the Teacher-Librarian. The Big Six Model of Eisenberg and Berkowitz (Big 6, 2017) was adopted in developing students' information literacy skills in order to enable them to be lifelong learners, who know "learning how to learn" (Curriculum Development Council, 2001). Being the most widely used approach to teaching information and technology skills in the world, the Big Six integrates information search and use skills along with technology tools in an organized and systematic manner. It enables students to find, use, apply, and evaluate information for specific needs and tasks. This problem solving model encompasses six stages. They include (1) Task Definition; (2) Information Seeking Strategies; (3) Location and Access; (4) Use of Information; (5) Synthesis and (6) Evaluation (Big 6, 2017). The General Studies teachers taught subject-related content about the local history of Hong Kong in the General Studies lessons. The middle managers of the school offered help in the monument tours over different regions. Most important of all, the support of the school principal in the implementation of the project was indispensable. Challenges faced in the project such as lack of time and resources were eliminated by the principal.

6. Supporting Students' Project Learning with Library Collections

To facilitate students' learning in "Treasure Hunt in Hong Kong", relevant print and non-print materials were collected and displayed in the school library. A bookshelf entitled "Information of Hong Kong" was set up for the collection of print materials in 2000. It comprised of a wide variety of reference materials mainly related to genealogy as well as the history and development of Hong Kong. The collection includes texts in different formats such as books, newspaper clipping, maps, community documents, leaflets, pamphlets, booklets and posters. Many valuable reference materials were collected from the Antiques and Monuments Office and the Hong Kong Museum of History. This bookshelf provided high quality and reliable reference sources relevant to the research needs of Primary Three students in the project "Treasure Hunt in Hong Kong" and addressed the information needs of primary school students as a whole. As for non-print materials, audio-visual materials were available from the library counter. Useful websites and eDatabases were provided to students and the General Studies Teachers. Electronic Resources from the Multimedia Information System of the Hong Kong Public Library, such as "The old Hong Kong Newspapers" and "Hong Kong Intangible Heritage" databases were incorporated into students' learning later on. Another bookshelf, entitled "Information of China" was set up beside the "Information of Hong Kong" bookshelf when the "The Basic Law Information Literacy Skills Program" was carried out in 2010.

7. Major Heritage Trails of the Project

The key component of the project was to design the three major heritage trails. They were the Ping Shan Tang Clan Heritage Trail, the Central and Western Heritage Trail and the Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail. Students could experience the unique culture and history of Hong Kong from the field trips.

7.1. Ping Shan Tang Clan Heritage Trail

The Ping Shan Tang Clan Heritage Trail is located in the southwestern New Territories. The trail passes through different small villages such as Hang Tau Tsuen, Hang Mei Tsuen and Sheung Cheung Wai. It consists of several declared monuments and graded buildings. Students could understand the old days of the Tang clan in Ping Shan from the exhibitions of

the Ping Shan Tang Clan Gallery and the Heritage Trail Visitor Centre. Tsui Sing Lau (聚星樓) can be claimed to be the most important declared monument of the trail as it is Hong Kong's only ancient pagoda. The pagoda's name in Chinese means "Pagoda of Gathering Stars". It was built more than 600 years ago according to the genealogy of the Tang clan of Ping Shan. Many people believe that the pagoda was originally seven-storey high. It was due to a strong typhoon which damaged the pagoda that only three storeys remain today. The pagoda was built to improve the *feng shui* of the area. The villagers believed that flooding disasters were prevented and clan members could pass the Imperial Civil Service Examinations with the blessings from this special building. In fact, according to the record of the Education Bureau, the Tang Clan of Ping Shan did produce numerous scholars and officials (Education and Manpower Bureau, n.d.).



Figure 3. "The Pagoda of Gathering Stars" of the Ping Shan Heritage Trail
(Source: Declared Monuments of Hong Kong, 2017).

7.2. Central and Western Heritage Trail

Different from the Ping Shan Tang Clan Heritage Trail, the Central and Western Heritage Trail is located on the northern coast of Hong Kong Island. The entire trail comprises three routes. They are the Central Route, the Sheung Wan Route, and also the Western District and the Peak Route. In this project, the focus was on the Sheung Wan Route as Dr Sun Yat-sen, the "Father of the Nation", was educated, baptized and did the planning of his revolution with comrades in this area. The Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum is located on the Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail. It acts as an important part of the Sheung Wan Route, which was set up by the Central and Western District Council. Buildings of different religions, traditional Chinese buildings, tea houses, and historic sites are found in this place. Fifteen out of thirty-five historic buildings and sites were selected for the study of the Primary Three students along the trail. All those remarkable buildings and sites reflect the growth of the city and witness its development over the years.



Figure 4. Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum
(Source: The Hong Kong Tourism Board, 2017)

7.3. Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail

“Lung Yeuk Tau” (龙跃头) in Chinese means “Mountain of a leaping dragon”. The name came from a legend that people once saw a dragon leaping in the mountains of the area. The Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail is located at Fanling of the New Territories. Students can learn about the Tang Clan, one of the largest clans in the New Territories from the scenic journey. It was believed that the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) had undergone overwhelming Mongol forces. A pursued princess took refuge with the Tang Clan and married one of the Tang men afterwards. Their descendants moved to Lung Yeuk Tau in the Yuan dynasty (1271-1638) and settled there for the rest of their lives. In order to conquer the bandits and pirates of the time, five out of eleven villages they built in the area were walled villages. They are “Lo Wai” (老围), “Man Wai Wai” (麻笏围), “Wing Ning Wai” (永宁围), “Tung Kok Wai” (东阁围) and San Wai” (新围). The Tang Clan preserves their relics in well condition. Students could still trace the Tang Clan’s beliefs from the Taoist temple complex, “Fung Ying Seen Koon”. The Tangs keep their practice and traditional customs, including communal worship twice a year in every spring and autumn. Another glamorous attraction, Tin Hau Temple, can be found on the trail for celebrating the goddess of the sea in the annual Tin Hau Festival.

8. “The Basic Law Information Literacy Skills Program” for Upper Primary

The Basic Law acts as a mini-constitution for the Hong Kong society. The most prominent feature of the law is the underlying principle of “One Country, Two Systems” whereby the capitalist system and way of life in Hong Kong is to remain unchanged for 50 years from July 1, 1997. Along with the Basic Law, all the laws previously in force such as common law, shall remain intact. Elements of the Basic Law have been embedded in the Primary Six General Studies curriculum by the Education Bureau (EDB). The content of the Basic Law was also gradually integrated into the Life and Social Science Curriculum of Junior high school. Moreover, enrichment of the Basic Law content has been made in the Revised Moral and Civic Education Curriculum Framework. In the 2010 Policy Address, the Chief Executive of HKSAR stated clearly that the EDB should strengthen her support on learning and teaching matters over the Basic Law and “One Country, Two Systems” in schools. Thereafter, a learning package from the EDB entitled, “Let’s Learn the Basic Law—Basic Law Learning Package (Senior Primary) (bilingual version)” was distributed to each primary school in 2011. Followed by the development of various learning and teaching resources, teaching kits were produced and different forms of activities were organized by the EDB so as to deepen students’ understanding of the principle of “One Country, Two Systems” and the Basic Law, and also to guide students to explore the relationships between the Basic Law and their daily life.

Prior to the actions taken by the EDB on making the Basic Law teaching kits for all primary schools, Lam Tin Methodist Primary School Library initiated the collaborative project, “The Basic Law Information Literacy Skills Program” for Upper Primary School Students in 2010. The Teacher-Librarian cooperated with the General Studies Panel to implement the cross-curricular activity from 2010 to the present. The project aims to increase students’ understanding of the relationship between the Basic Law and daily life, thus enabling them to learn better in General Studies, especially on the topic of the Basic Law. Most importantly, the project also targets on enhancing students’ understanding over the value of the Basic Law, cultivating students’ positive views towards the Law and the willingness to follow it. The outcome of this enrichment project has been encouraging, as the students have done well in their studies of the important constitutional document and issues of the Basic Law. The students even became the champion of “The second Basic Law of the Hong Kong Inter - school Q & A Competition”, which was organized by the EDB in 2016.

9. Active Learning with Information Literacy Skills

To engage students' learning interest on the Basic Law, Lam Tin Methodist Primary School Library has developed different innovative ideas to help students pursue their learning goals. A Google Site was built with rich multimedia content such as videos, texts, websites with online games and quizzes by the Teacher-Librarian. The Google Site will be put into use after the Teacher-Librarian and the Upper Primary General Studies Teachers' annual review. Students are expected to answer all the quizzes after reading the provided materials, watching the videos, playing the games from the provided websites or reading the suggested books from the school library or the Hong Kong Public Libraries. It was estimated from the survey of 2014 that over 95% participants enjoyed learning the Basic Law in this online format, 94% participants confirmed the effectiveness of this project on their understanding over the value of the Basic Law and its relationship with daily life.

10. Challenges and Sustainability of the Projects

Lam Tin Methodist Primary School library is very proud of using the local history library collections and the available genealogical materials both inside and outside the library to effectively support the learning and teaching needs of the General Studies curriculum. Students can put their information literacy skills into practice in their project work. All the projects mentioned above keep running in school even nowadays. However, due to the ever-changing curriculum and information technology development, continuous cross-curricular review of the projects is needed annually to ensure all the projects are still applicable to the social, educational and school contexts. The rapid development of information technology urges the renewal of strategies such as eBooks over the Basic Law on the Google Site to enhance the interactive learning process. The sustainability of the projects adds value to the local history and genealogy research. Students can know the past to understand the present and plan for the future. It also creates a positive impact on the solidarity of the society.

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