

Compulsory Education

A General Information

The infrastructure of a country and the development of its economy are a function of the country's cultivation of manpower and talent. This requires long term, continued investment and needs to start from the very bottom. The government set the length of compulsory education at 9 years in SY1968, and will further extend it to 12 years in SY2014, which will help nurture and develop the manpower needed for economic growth.

Ensuring that all toddlers receive proper preschool education is a major objective of our educational policy. Kindergartens are preschool institutions set up in accordance with relevant legislation for children aged 4 and above up until the eligible age for elementary school, and are supervised by education administrative authorities, whereas nurseries are welfare organizations set up in accord with Children and Youth Welfare Act that accept toddlers aged 2 to 6 and are supervised by social administrative authorities. The talks and negotiations for merging nurseries and kindergartens started in 1997, and culminated in the Early Childhood Education and Care Act passed on June 29, 2011, to be put in place beginning Jan 1, 2012.



B Preschool and Compulsory Education Structure

The Early Childhood Education and Care Act is a revolutionary move in our preschool system. After the bill was enacted on Jan 1, 2012, nurseries and kindergartens were redesignated “preschools”, in which toddlers from the age of 2 onwards are given complete and thorough education and care in the preschool until they enter elementary school. This bill consolidated the education and care of toddlers under a single administrative system, putting into practice a toddler-centered strategy that focuses on the toddler's best interests. Taiwan is also the first country in Asia to consolidate the two systems.

According to statistics by UNESCO, there are over 40 countries in the world that have a basic education system that exceeds 10 years. The main reason for this is that many non-developed countries have noticed that basic education is directly connected to national competitiveness.

Put into practice in SY1968, Taiwan's 9-year Compulsory Education system is compulsory, free and obligatory. Legislation states that citizens from the age of 6 to 15 should receive compulsory education; which is divided into two stages – the first 6 years at the elementary school level, and the latter 3 in junior high school. However, this system has been in place for over 4 decades. When first put in place, there were fewer than 10 countries worldwide with more than 9 years of compulsory education in place, making us one of the forerunners. Compared with developed countries, however, the number of years was not that high. To solve the current educational conundrum and enhance the development of national manpower, a 12-year Basic Education system will be adopted in SY2014, a new landmark for our education system.

C Preschool and Compulsory Education Policies

Under Taiwan's educational setup, preschool education is not compulsory. The education and care of preschool-aged toddlers was originally provided by, respectively, kindergartens and nurseries, largely consisting of privately-established institutions. As the two systems were separate and had different supervisory administrative units, they evolved different set-up standards and have different regulations regarding personnel and curriculum. Thus toddlers of the same age often received inconsistent education and care at different institutions. Also, internationally, the trend of offering education service has become a common scene. We thus started to promote the integration of early childhood education and care.

To stimulate the development of junior high and elementary school education and improve its quality, and lay the groundwork for course planning, fundamental research in the development of elementary and junior high school curricula was carried out and added to the 12-year Basic Education policy strategic plan in 2012 to allow the National Academy for Educational Research to complete the Proposal for 12-Year Basic Education Curriculum Development and Guidance for 12-year Basic Education Curriculum Development to ensure consistency.

With increasing globalization in recent years, many nations are experiencing a growing income gap between the wealthy and the poor as well as unequal resource distribution between town and country. Geographical factors and rapid changes in society can lead to uneven distribution of educational resources, causing an educational imbalance between town and country and depriving minority groups of equal access. To solve these regional education issues and bridge the resource gap between different locations, we are working to put the following into practice: reasonable distribution of educational resources, equality in educational opportunity, and realization of equal education and a just and fair society.

Another key strategy is the idea of social care and assisting in the education of children from economically disadvantaged families. Currently there are 3,439 public senior high schools, vocational high schools and junior high schools as well as elementary schools participating in the Promoting School Education Savings Account project nationwide, which authorizes the schools to receive charitable donations. Many philanthropists in both business and society have been long term donors to children in the program, a testament to the generosity of the people of Taiwan. ●



Equal Emphasis on Academic Achievement and Disaster Prevention

Chunan Elementary School



Despite its location in an area where Minnan culture occupies a dominant position, Miaoli's Chunan Elementary School took the crown in the lower grade division of the singing competition at the National Hakka Art and Culture Competition for Elementary and Middle Schools in 2013, winning for the third time in a row.

Considering only five percent of Chunan's students come from Hakka families, this is an impressive record indeed. The winning musical number, titled "Memories under the Tung Trees" integrated four Hakka songs to lively reproduce an elder's memories.

The school's success is due to

the continuous effort at putting into promoting multi-cultures. A Hakka language section on the school website serves to introduce primary-level Hakka folksongs and customs, offering multiple channels for learning.

In addition to elevating students' knowledge in local cultures, Chunan also puts emphasis on disaster prevention education in light of the frequent natural disasters that occur in Taiwan.

Special emphasis is placed on earthquakes, typhoons, floods and fire. A team covering five sub-divisions of guidance, rescue, first aid, reporting, and security was set up to take charge of different tasks.

Chunan invites sixth graders to

participate in excursions to record current campus conditions; give suggestions regarding space usage; and help in preparing and disseminating publicity to lower graders.

Other events included watching disaster prevention films; competitions on related themes; and various other types of information. In 2013, 11 earthquake escape and two firefighting drills were held, according to Kuo Ching-ju, Section Chief of Student Activities.

"Education is the most economically-efficient investment," said Kuo. "Therefore we are shouldering the educational function, aided by community resources in developing a disaster prevention plan." ●

Infusing LOHAS Attitudes in Education

Taipei Longmen Junior High School



Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS) is a trend taking root everywhere around the world lately. That includes the core educational ideals of Longmen Junior High School in Taipei, where students enjoy a custom LOHAS learning environment.

In compliance with school core values such as diversity, adaptability and balance, a series of programs closely attached to “happy learning, happy interaction and happy life” has been developed to equip students with “the abilities to learn, create and fulfill.”

Happy learning aims to explore suitable learning methods; happy interaction is targeted at cultivating a spirit of teamwork

and interpersonal skills, and enhancing social adaptability; while happy life involves family life and outdoor activities.

The stated goals are wrapped in fun-packed lessons. First, students are asked to draw a radar diagram from the perspectives of time to evaluate their self-study status, learning, health, family and other criteria to help them with self-exploration and setting up personal goals.

Then teachers and students join hands to create their own textbooks, starting with a unique cover design. Each one-of-a-kind textbook records words and pictures that convey individual thoughts, returning autonomy in learning to students.

During spring break, 8th graders are given an opportunity to explore different careers through interviews conducted with family members and presented through video, acoustic, or presentation methods. They also participate in professional consulting camps to gain hands-on experience; they listen to speeches to learn more about specific jobs; and they exchange ideas in class to expand their horizons.

In addition, students are also encouraged to express their gratitude to their elementary teachers; guided to understand gender concepts better; taught to respect every individual; and led to develop better parent/child communication techniques. ●