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Developing an English Language Programme for Chinese Private International High Schools: Management and Implementation

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Abstract: This paper proposes an English speaking and writing programme for Chinese private international high school students aged 16–18 who intend to study abroad. The programme aims to improve students' productive language skills for everyday communication and academic study through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and authentic materials. From an educational management perspective, the paper examines the administrative and human resource requirements involved in developing and implementing the programme. It also discusses the opportunities and constraints associated with Chinese private international schools, including curriculum regulations, differences in students' abilities, teacher workload, and the recruitment and adaptation of foreign teachers. Based on these considerations, the paper proposes practical management strategies related to curriculum planning, staff recruitment, workload allocation, teacher development, and communication with stakeholders. The paper highlights the importance of coordinating educational objectives with institutional requirements and available resources to support the effective implementation of the proposed programme.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching; Educational Management; Productive Language Skills.

1. Introduction

The proposed business initiative is to develop a new English language programme focusing on speaking and writing for Chinese private international high school students who intend to study abroad. The target students are aged 16–18 and already have a good foundation in reading and listening. The aim of the programme is to improve their speaking and writing skills for daily communication and academic study. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) will be the main teaching approach, with authentic materials used by native English-speaking teachers.

However, establishing a new programme requires more than appropriate teaching methods. Effective administration, curriculum development, and human resource management are also essential to ensure that the programme meets students' needs. In Chinese private international schools, managers must also consider curriculum requirements, differences in students' abilities, teacher workloads, and the recruitment of qualified foreign teachers.

This paper examines the administrative and human resource requirements for developing the programme, analyses the constraints and opportunities in Chinese private international schools, and proposes practical solutions to anticipated implementation challenges.

2. General View in Administration and Human Resource (HR)

2.1. Administration

2.1.1. Organizing Resources and Information

To start a new business, there are five aspects to organize resources and information. Time management could be a vital part. As a manager, it is important to know how to manage their own time. To self-manage, Mangers should be aware of the type and source of their works and have a clear thought about the outcome and delegations (Pedler et al., 2013). Beside of this, timetables make sure that all parts of the organization could worked in order (White et al., 1991). Office system is vital for language teaching organizations (LTO) to provide services, such as contacting with their customers and students, performing the tasks which makes LTO run properly. Records is also a chain to make sure the LTO run legally. In the last, official hardware and training staffs to use them is also important.

2.1.2. Curriculum Development and Innovation

Curriculum not only refers to teaching content but also devising syllabuses, making decision on materials and assessing learners' performances (White et al., 1991). According to Taba (1962) and Tyler (2013), there are four main elements involved in the curriculum model—objectives, evaluation, methods and content. Skilbeck (1990) situational curriculum model provides a clear procedure for curriculum development. Managers should analyse the current situation. Marketing needs and policies should also be considered. Secondly, managers should define objectives, then design and interpret teaching-learning programme. In the last, performances should be evaluated. While curriculum innovation is also crucial (White et al., 1991). Managers need to gather information and resources before they conduct innovation. Then they should make a clear and direct plan before they communicate with the staff and stake holders. A clear plan and effective communication are key elements for innovation (White et al., 1991).

2.1.3. Communication in Schools

Basically, there are four types of communication in current administration system (White et al., 1991). The first type is top-down communication which managers make decisions firstly and staffs implement decisions. The second type is bottom-up communication. Compared with the downwards communication, upwards communication could gather more information and staffs could equally be a part of decision-

making. The third type is lateral communication which may regard all parts in the organization as whole. The fourth type of communication is outwards communication which combined the internal out external environment and information together.

2.1.4. Challenges and Solutions in Administration

With so many things to deal with, managers should figure out the main goal for each day and each week. Managers need to set priorities and deadline for things. Also, other participants should be well organized into the schedule. Managers should establish an efficient way to communicate with others. The four modes of communication mentioned earlier can be put to good use in this context.

In addition to this, when managers are faced with conflict, it can be a challenge to communicate with both sides of the conflict. Managers should have the ability to judge and anticipate potential conflicts. Listening and analysing the source of conflict is a good solution when faced with a series of conflicts. Managers should identify the level of conflict and consider the views and constraints of both parties to the conflict to communicate with the parties involved in the conflict to get a resolution.

A further possible challenge is the dilemma that managers can get into when undertaking curriculum development and innovation. Faced with such a situation, administrators should first identify the needs and then set the goals for change. With this as a basis, the administrator should consult with the teacher on relevant professional matters in time to determine the direction of the innovation (Skilbeck, 1990).

2.2. Three Dimensions in Human Resource Management

2.2.1. Staffing the Organization

To be more specific, staffing the organization refers to selecting staffs for specific positions. In the part of job description, managers need to describe job and expertise they need clearly. Early and Coleman (2005) suggests that, in LTO, many teachers might take the responsibilities for staff selecting. But the process of selection should be performed in a professional way to meet the requirements. This situation would cause inefficiency and problem on human resource management (Foskett and Lumby, 2003).

2.2.2. Performance Management

Performance management aims to make sure staffs could finish the job to meet the objectives. Foskett and Lumby (2003) suggest five tools to use. Probation is to evaluate whether teachers are qualified. Induction makes sure that new staffs could fit the organization well. But these two steps might be ignored in many countries (Foskett and Lumby, 2003). Performance appraisal and inspection is to assess the outcomes of both students and teachers to account, develop and reward staffs. Incentive is to utilize payment and promotion system to facilitate staff meet goals. In the last, mangers should make sure that the innovation is valid by evaluation and assessment.

2.2.3. Staff Development and Succession

Staff development aims to make sure teachers could learn new skills and knowledge to fit the change of the external environment. To make sure staff would apply skills and knowledge to word, it is of necessity to appraise achievements, obstacles and career aspirations (White et al., 1991). According to Early and Coleman (2005), school-based and school focused continuing professional development (CPD) should include all members to whom are relevant. Succession is another approach. Manager need to provide career consultations for staffs to help them promote and plan their career (White et al., 1991).

2.2.4. Challenges and Solutions in HRM

As teaching is a profession, ordinary administrators are often unable to intervene in the assessment of teaching. Therefore, the administrator is often someone who has teaching skills on the side. This can lead to excessive pressure on teachers and an unfair distribution of tasks for teachers with redundant workloads. To address this challenge, teachers who also perform administrative functions should have different salary structures and other staff should be employed for administrative tasks that do not involve specialisation (Early and Coleman, 2005).

3. Constraints and Affordance in Chinese Private International School

In China, there are two main types of international schools. The first is that students go aboard to study, and another is that schools introduce foreign approaches and ideology in education in domestic environment (Young, 2018). Though private schools are different from public schools, China's current educational system is highly standardised. Although the government decentralised primary and secondary education in the 1980s, transferring the administration and management of schools to lower levels of government, the national government still supervises the main syllabuses, as well as the private schools have been legislated since 1985 (Liu and Dunne, 2009). For private schools, teaching materials would also be supervised by local government and some curriculums are compulsory (Young, 2018). This might be a constraint for LTO that foreign teachers could not access the ideal materials for students. If teachers would like to apply some authentic materials which are not included in the list of regulations, it would fail to make students fully exposed to the ideal environment to acquire second language. Even some publications could not be accessed in China.

All international schools in China are subsidiary to foreign ministries of education or International Baccalaureate programmes, which accredit schools and their teachers and certify them to award diplomas. Dual Curriculum International Schools are under the direct supervision of the regional education department (Yan et al., 2015). Applicants take the high school entrance exam and once accepted, complete a standard Chinese curriculum in addition to IB. Graduates are awarded both Chinese and international high school diplomas and can suit for university entrance examinations in China or attend university overseas (Young, 2018). Dual curriculum school might have a difficulty for manager to balance the time occupation. This policy constraints might cause insufficiency in both Chinese compulsory curriculum and international curriculum. But teaching methods from developed countries and regions such as the USA, UK, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong are wildly applied in private international school (Cheng and DeLany, 1999). In addition to computer and foreign language courses, some schools offer music, dance and fine art, taking into account the special talents of their students.

Private international schools are regarded as elite education in China (Young, 2018). According to Young's research, the elite is described as the main consumer of international education. Most are domestic migrants or members of China's

new entrepreneurial class. This provide abundant fund for running LTO. Advanced equipment, materials and highly educated teachers could be employed to run schools. Private schools have the right to hire and fire people, using a competitive mechanism. Because public schools have significant autonomy in determining teacher salaries, hiring and management, teachers earn more than those in public schools. This attracts experienced teachers with strong teaching skills. High-quality teachers ensure high-quality education (Tiehua, 1996).

But this might also cause other constraints for LTO. Family backgrounds could provide academic resource for their children. Bourdieu (1998) hold the opinion that new entrepreneurial class lack the resources to foster the academic achievement of their children. This might lead to the weak academic performance of some students. The work load of management and the efficiency of the teaching activities might be influenced by the large difference among students (Yan et al., 2015).

Private international high schools have a very high turnover of teachers (Tiehua, 1996). As private high schools have hiring autonomy, the employment of teachers and other staff is linked to their performance. Therefore, when there are instances where assessments are not up to standard, the adjustment of teachers can create some hindrance to student learning.

China's Ministry of Labour (2017) has strict regulations on the employment of foreign teachers. Regulations on the Administration of Foreigners' Employment in China has provided protection for foreign labours, but restrictions are also mentioned in the regulations. Regarding the management of foreign teachers employed by private education and training institutions. Foreign teachers who have undergone employment permit procedures should be dynamically managed by the local labour security department in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations, with emphasis on the duration of the employment contract and employment permit, changes in employment and the employer, and salary rates, etc. Any foreign teachers found to be illegally employed should be promptly referred to the public security authorities for investigation and punishment. There are complex procedures and certifications behind the employment of foreign teachers. There also exists cultural constraints. According to Yi et al. (2020), the main challenges faced by foreign teachers during cross-cultural adaptation in China are communication obstacles, unfamiliar with living conditions, different culture and traditions and supportive relationships. Zhu (2007) suggested that this might cause pressure and frustration to foreign teachers, which could influence their professional performance. As a manager, it is a crucial constraint for meeting the objectives and goals.

According to what have mentioned above, constrains and affordance both exist. Generally, policies support the self-autonomy for private international schools, however, the Ministry of Education also requires that international schools cover the same educational content as public schools during the compulsory education period. And external environment shows a prosperous need for private international schools, which could afford financial and marketing support for international school running. As for staff recruitment, government have clear regulations to protect and restrict foreign labours. Another affordance and constraints are that foreign teachers in the different culture context could fluctuate the professional performance in work. Manager should consider all the constraints and give a new plan and get full use of affordance.

4. Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

The anticipated teaching context concerns secondary school students who will soon be studying abroad. They all have a good foundation in the language but are lacking in writing and speaking. The foreign teachers will use CLT and more authentic materials to expose the students to a second language environment. Administrators will face many challenges based on the constraints and affordances of Chinese private international high schools and the administrative and human resource management aspects.

Firstly, according to Yan et al. (2015), Chinese parents tend to use private international schools as a refuge for their children when they are not doing well in public high schools, so this situation can create some management challenges. Students can vary in their academic performance and this variation can have an impact on their ability to acquire a second language. Donna (2000) suggested that different strengths could be used in mixed level classes. If necessary, different criteria could be applied to evaluate students' academic performance. Besides, managers need to focus on this kind of students specifically in order to strengthen their ability. It is therefore important for administrators to assess the students' abilities and then to communicate with them at home in order to develop the curriculum of speaking and writing that will help them achieve their goals that they could conduct a daily communication when they go abroad. In this process, the administrator should communicate with the teacher to ensure that the teacher is able to monitor the student's academic performance in a timely manner. In addition, administrators should also engage in external communication with parents to ensure that parents and students do not disagree with the curriculum. This has the advantage of helping students who are lagging in their academic performance to reach the average level of teaching. This facilitates the delivery of the curriculum without negative outcomes in terms of curriculum assessment due to student academic performance issues.

As private international schools adopt a dual curriculum in accordance with national regulations. This means that students in international schools are required to study the local curriculum as well as the international curriculum. If new non-exam-related skills-based training is added to this, it will have an impact on the time allocation of students and the workload of teachers. It is also a challenge for administrators to balance time management within the school. This needs to involve managing the incentive model for employees. White et al. (1991) mentions providing additional rewards to employees through appraisals. If in a new course staff meet the needs of the course well and show great professionalism, and get better performance in teaching feedback, then the teacher will get extra pay. But this again raises the issue of inequality in teacher pay. It is also a challenge to select the right teachers to teach the course.

Administrators should gauge the needs of different students. If a student's goal is to enter a university in their home country for further study, then the local curriculum should be their focus of study. Even if these students will enter overseas universities for further study at postgraduate level, this new programme will not be their main course of study. If students

will be applying to overseas universities at undergraduate level, this course should be a higher proportion of their academic curriculum.

For the selection of teachers, the administrator should first assess the available teachers. The courses should be arranged according to their current workload. If the teacher's workload is excessive, then the administrator should hire a new professional teacher to teach. These teachers should have excellent general speaking and writing skills. For the addition of new courses, the teacher's motivational model should be reinforced. Managers should communicate with teachers in a timely manner in order to achieve a relatively fair salary assessment (Early and Coleman, 2005).

Foreign teachers make up a large proportion of private international schools (Zhu, 2007). Zhu (2007) suggests that foreign teachers teaching in China can create a number of restrictions. In addition to policy, the impact of cultural differences will be an important factor in the academic standards of teachers. Managers should give foreign teachers extra care and career advice on top of this. For example, administrators can provide each foreign teacher with a local teaching assistant to help them maintain discipline in the classroom, and beyond that, administrators should develop a comprehensive logistical plan for foreign teachers that can help them integrate better into the Chinese educational landscape. From the internal side of the school, administrators can provide more cultural building when foreign teachers are teaching in China, for example by providing reliable relationships and a friendly working environment.

The policy likewise provides challenges for the development of new courses. China's labour laws strictly regulate the length of time that foreign workers can work in China and the remuneration for their work. If new courses are added, you as an administrator should consider balancing the workload of foreign teachers. As we mentioned earlier, making the increased workload equitable among teachers by changing the salary structure will have to be reconsidered.

In addition to this, as what have mentioned above, the teaching materials used by private international high schools in China are also regulated by the local education authorities. When administrators are setting up the syllabus for this new course, it can be challenging to find the proper materials. In the absence of suitable materials, the administrator should convene a group of specialist teachers to discuss how to use the materials available to meet the teaching objectives. For example, administrators can update their teaching methods by gathering external information.

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