

Part 3

Lesson Conferencing: The curriculum context of learning

The practice of teaching is variously contextualised. Each different context provides both opportunities and constraints. All teaching takes place within *a curriculum context*; an overarching framework of syllabus content, methods, aims, justifications, that variously determines the teaching and learning of each individual lesson. In Hong Kong, the new Key Learning Areas (KLAs) and the emphasis on moving from passive to active learning, the development of creative thinking and the integration of values across the curriculum, combine to provide the context for teaching and learning. Lesson conferencing, when conducted in Hong Kong, will inevitably be influenced by, and will need to be responsive to, the local curriculum context.

Unit 5

The curriculum context for practice



Introduction

The practices of pre and post-lesson conferencing, when conducted in Hong Kong, will inevitably reflect the Hong Kong curriculum context. Questions about what pupils should learn, the teaching methods used and whether pupils are learning anything worthwhile (considered in other Units of this pack), must be responsive to that context, particularly the current Hong Kong education reforms. This includes, the new Key Learning Areas (KLAs), the emphasis on moving from passive to active learning, the development of creative thinking and the integration of values and attitudes across the curriculum.

In this Unit, we will be considering some of these issues as they arise in a pre-lesson conference, the observed lesson and the post-lesson conference of a Chinese Language lesson.

The video for this Unit provides the opportunity to view the three stages of the teaching and conferencing cycle, (pre-lesson conference, the lesson, and the post-lesson conference) as a continuous whole. The Unit is therefore different from other Units, in that it uses only one lesson as the source for the four activities.

Though only two teachers act as reviewers, the lesson was observed by a number of teachers and some visitors. Teachers using this Unit are invited to imaginatively enter the cycle of lesson observation and conferencing and to provide their ideas and reflections on what they see and hear.



Objectives

There are two main objectives for this Unit:

1. To consider the implications of the Hong Kong curriculum context for lesson observation and conferencing, especially in regard to the education Reforms, the move from passive to active learning, the development of creative thinking and the integration of values and attitudes across the curriculum.
2. To help participants appreciate the holistic nature of, and interrelationship between, the three stages of the teaching and conferencing cycle, (pre-lesson conference, the lesson, and the post-lesson conference).



Video Description 1 - The Pre-lesson conference

In this extract, a beginning teacher (seated in the middle) is preparing to teach a Chinese lesson, based on the story of ‘The Fox and the Grapes’. In the pre-lesson conference, she is discussing her choice of content with two colleagues.

(As preparation for viewing the pre-lesson conference, we suggest you consider doing the activity given below.)

20 mins



Small group discussion

Activity A: Preparation for Viewing

In this Unit, we use the ‘preparation for viewing’ as an opportunity for discussion.

We suggest that the Chinese Language teachers take a leading role in this activity, perhaps acting as leaders for the small groups. You may also wish to refer back to Unit 2 and the notes given on pre-lesson conferencing to guide your thinking.

The lesson is on the story of ‘The Fox and the Grapes’. This is a very well known part of the Hong Kong curriculum for P.3 students. The story is an allegory (寓言) in which the characters and actions represent general truths, good and bad qualities, etc. The story is given in Appendix 1 at the end of this Unit.

Given the nature of this story, if you are going to hold a pre-lesson conference with the lesson teacher, what preliminary questions would you ask about teaching this lesson?

Given the Hong Kong Curriculum context, make some brief notes on the following issues:

- What should be the object of learning of this lesson, considering the emphasis placed on language development, active learning, creative thinking, and the integration of values, etc. in the new curriculum guidelines?
- What content would you expect the teacher to include in this lesson;
- What teaching methods might you expect her to use, including the sequencing of the lesson;
- Are there any potential problems or pupil misunderstandings likely to surface in this topic that you need to be aware of when discussing the lesson with the teacher?

Approximately 7 mins



Now Watch Video Sequence 1

Unit 5_Video 1

25 mins



Small group role play

Activity B

Having seen the extract of the actual pre-lesson conference conducted with this beginning teacher, you may like to role play your own version of how you think it could have been done differently. For example, the mentors are giving much helpful advice, but is it too much or just about right? What do you think, and why? Base your role play on the notes you made in response to the questions in activity A.

Form yourselves into threes or fours, where one person can play the role of the beginning teacher, and the others her colleagues. Give yourselves ten minutes for this version of the role play and then swap roles to create an alternative version. In the second version, try focusing on different issues or giving somewhat different answers.



Video Description 2 - The Lesson

In this extract from the lesson, the teacher and pupils are engaging in questions and answers about the story of 'The Fox and the Grapes'. At the same time, they are focusing on the meaning of the key words in the text. The lesson concludes with the teacher drawing together the main theme of the lesson.



Preparation for Viewing

When viewing the lesson, make careful notes on the points that you will want to raise when discussing this sequence in the following Activity C. Give your overall judgment as to whether you feel this was achieving aims that are consistent with the Hong Kong curriculum reforms.

You may like to use the viewing sheet provided in Appendix 2 of this Unit.

Approximately **11 mins**



Now Watch Video Sequence 2

Unit 5_Video 2

25 mins



Activity C

Small group discussion

In small groups discuss your views of the lesson extract observed.

- Did this lesson provide evidence that the teacher was aware of the need to encourage creativity and active learning, and to integrate values across the curriculum (the Hong Kong context of the new Reforms)?
- What does it mean to be an effective teacher of Chinese in the new HK curriculum context? To what extent do you find evidence of effective teaching in the lesson you have observed.
- Was this a worthwhile and enjoyable learning experience for these pupils? What evidence would you cite to support your answer?
- Was there a clear link between the discussion in the pre-lesson conference and what actually took place in this lesson?
- What additional points might you raise if you were conducting the post-lesson conference?



Video Description 3 - The Post-lesson Conference

This clip provides three short sequences from the post-lesson conference. The first is on the issue of whether the teacher should be confined by the textbook. The second sequence concerns the issue of creativity and the third is on learning to learn.



Preparation for Viewing

When viewing this sequence, notice how the mentors are not distracted by

the apparent success of the lesson. They asks quite searching and yet positive questions. Notice also, how this level of supportive criticism leads to a very productive post-lesson conference.

Approximately 9 mins 

Now Watch Video Sequence 3

Unit 5_Video 3

25 mins

Small group discussion



Activity D

- According to the new curriculum, lessons should provide a springboard for pupils' further learning, both within and beyond the school context. Do you think this lesson contributes to the 'learning to learn' aim?
- What skills did you notice the experienced teacher using in helping the lesson teacher to reflect deeply about her lesson?

In addition;

- How can mentors encourage student teachers or beginning teachers handle vocabulary skilfully and in ways that go beyond textbook learning?
- To what extent do you believe the teacher's use of body language contributed to the overall tone and learning environment of this lesson and the engagement of pupils in the process of learning? Is this something that mentors should comment on in a post-lesson conference?

20 mins

Whole group sharing



This whole group sharing session provides an opportunity for each small group to report back on the insights that they have considered in their discussions in regard to:

- the curriculum context for teaching and learning in Hong Kong;
- the extent to which the pre-lesson conference, lesson and post-lesson conference provide a helpful example of lesson conferencing practice.

Some small groups may wish to provide examples of some of their role plays in order to illustrate the points they want to make.

Unit 5 total time: 145 mins

Unit 5 Appendix 1



Activity A (Small group discussion)

Transcript for discussion of Activity A

狐狸和葡萄

小路旁邊有果園，
園裏葡萄一串串，
葡萄又多又香甜，
芳香的氣味飄得遠。

遠遠的山邊有狐狸，
隨著香味到果園，
園裏的葡萄高高掛，
惹得狐狸團團轉。

紅葡萄，香又甜，
小狐狸，跑上前，
跳呀跳呀採不到，
葡萄仍然高高懸。

小狐狸，白費力，
不甘心，且抱怨：
「園裏的葡萄沒人採，
這樣的葡萄一定酸！」

The Fox and the Grapes

A vineyard located beside a small path;
With bunches and bunches of grapes inside;
Ripening on a vine with a fragrant scent;
Spreading the aroma across the field.

A fox came from a far away hill;
Following the aroma to the field;
Gazing at the grapes on lofty branches;
Jumping and jumping round and round.

Dark red grapes, sweet and ripe;
Little fox, leaps ahead;
Hopping and hopping but in vain;
Staring at the grapes hanging above.

Little fox, jumps in vain;
Unwilling to admit his defeat, he grunts;
"These grapes have been left unpicked;
They must be sour and not desired."

Unit 5 Appendix 2



Activity C (Small group discussion)

Viewing sheet for Activity C

Timing	Lesson Content	Key issues to be raised

Unit 6

The subject specifics of teaching



Introduction

This Unit is premised on the view that lesson conferencing must focus on the subject specifics of teaching. It is assumed that the teachers studying this Unit will be well versed on how to teach their subject, within the context of the Hong Kong curriculum.

Being a good mentor or peer reviewer, however, not only requires good subject knowledge and personal teaching skills, it also requires an ability to analyse lessons and raise important and searching subject relevant questions, in a supportive but challenging manner. That is why it cannot be assumed that a very good subject teacher will inevitably be a good mentor, able to support a novice teacher and pass on her/his teaching skills. Also, a good mentor or peer reviewer will be aware that a novice teacher or colleague may have insights about how to teach the subject that he or she has overlooked.

It is strongly suggested that you work in subject-based grouping for much of this Unit. Each subject grouping has its own subject video, which will provide a prompt for discussion. The Unit as a whole will be based around three questions:

- what does it mean to be a good teacher of this subject;
- what skills are required to be a good mentor in this subject;
- what is required when structuring and designing a productive post-lesson conference in regard to this subject?

The Unit ends with an opportunity for each subject group to present their ideas in a plenary, where similarities and differences in the answers to these questions can be discussed.



Objectives

1. To consider the role of a mentor or peer reviewer in conducting lesson observation and analysis within the context of the new Key Learning Areas (KLAs) of the Hong Kong curriculum;
2. To raise awareness, in the context of lesson conferencing, of what it means to be a good subject teacher and a good mentor in relation to the Hong Kong KLAs;
3. To foster the skills of structuring and designing a productive post-lesson conference in regard to subject expertise.

10 mins



Individual brain storming

Activity A: Individual brain storming


We begin with an individual brain storming activity. It is suggested that each individual participant uses 5 minutes to quietly consider their own answers to the following questions:

Look at the table below. (*An enlarged version is given in appendix 1 for you to photocopy*). It provides a number of characteristics of a good teacher.

Choose a topic in your own subject area to provide examples of the following characteristics. For example in Science, you might choose the topic of condensation and evaporation. Then, what does it mean to have a clear understanding of this topic? Your answer might be ‘to understand that changes of states of water result from changes in temperature and that water continues to be water in each of the three states.’


(Additional spaces are provided at the end of the table, in the Appendix, for your own suggested characteristics of a good teacher in your subject.)

	An example from your own subject
Having a clear understanding of the subject	
Using good questioning techniques	
Developing a feel for the subject	
Integrating values & attitudes into the subject	
Moving from learning facts to discovering meanings	
Allowing pupils space to question and probe the subject	

20 mins 
Subject group sharing

In your subject group, report on your individual brainstorming:

1. Share your views with others in your subject group. Compare, contrast and further discuss these views with the aim of refining them.
2. Do you think some of the ideas given in the table above are more important than others in your subject? Explain your reasons.

30 mins 
Small group discussion

Activity B

In your small group, we will now focus on a very specific topic in your subject, with a specific age group of pupils.

In the list given below, each subject has its own topic to consider. These are familiar topics within each subject. Think back to how you have handled that particular topic in the past, and also think how you might handle it in the future, if you were to be a bit more ambitious. Then consider the questions given in the table below. The questions asked about each topic are the same.

Subject	Level	Topics
Chinese	P.5	Vocabulary for the chapter on editing a newspaper
English	P.4	Present continuous tense
Maths	P.6	Making shapes with two triangles
G. S.	P.5	Dressing a wound in First Aid
Music	P.3	Learning to pitch F# on the recorder
P. E.	P.2	Bodily awareness using hoops
Art	P.3	How to make a dinosaur using clay

Questions:

For your subject area, when teaching the above topic:

- What are pupils meant to learn from studying this topic at the relevant Key Stage (KS)?
 - What content should be covered in teaching this topic?
 - What methods will best ensure pupils learn this topic?
-

Discuss these questions in your subject group, listening to each other's point of view and prepare a flip chart of all the answers given. For each question, there should be a set of answers reflecting the different viewpoints on what this topic involves and how best to teach it.

(The result of this detailed discussion will be fed back to other colleagues from other subject grouping in the final plenary of this Unit.)



Video Description

We are now in the position to view the video clips for each subject area. The clip will provide an extract from a lesson where the topic that you have just discussed is being taught by a novice teacher.



Preparation for viewing

When viewing the clip, notice carefully how it is being taught and the extent to which it matches the answers given by your group to the three bullet points listed above. These will provide a framework of ideas to guide your viewing.

On the basis of your answers to these questions, begin to think of the issues or questions you would raise in a post-lesson conference with this teacher.

Approximately 15 mins



Now Watch the Video Sequence for Your Subject

Unit 6_Video 1	Chinese	(around 14 mins)
Unit 6_Video 2	English	(around 10 mins)
Unit 6_Video 3	Mathematics	(around 16 mins)
Unit 6_Video 4	General Study	(around 14 mins)
Unit 6_Video 5	Music	(around 10 mins)
Unit 6_Video 6	Physical Education	(around 9 mins)
Unit 6_Video 7	Arts	(around 16 mins)

30 mins




Small group discussion

Activity C

The aim of this activity for each subject group is to prepare an outline plan for a half hour post-lesson conference with the novice teacher you have just observed. A proforma to help guide your thinking is provided in Appendix 2 to this Unit. In completing this proforma, you may find many issues to consider, which have to be reduced in number in order to fit in with the allotted time. In other words, you need to prioritise those issues which your group feels are most important.

In undertaking this task, you may feel that there are points you want to raise in the plenary session that follows, which do not fit onto this proforma. Make a note of them on a separate sheet so they can form part of your small group presentations.

45 mins 
Whole group sharing

Each subject group now has the opportunity to feedback to the whole group, providing a flavour of their subject-based discussion. Make the feedback as crisp but also as informative as possible, within the available time (perhaps 5 minutes per group). In organising your presentation, you may like to consider answering the three questions raised in the introduction to this Unit. Use your flip charts from activities A and B as part of your presentation.

- What does it mean to be a good teacher of this subject?
- What skills are required to be a good mentor in this subject?
- What is required when structuring and designing a productive post-lesson conference in regard to this subject?

Unit 6 total time: 150 mins

Unit 6 Appendix 1



Activity A (Individual brain storming)

	An example from your own subject
Having a clear understanding of the subject	
Using good questioning techniques	
Developing a feel for the subject	
Integrating values & attitudes into the subject	
Moving from learning facts to discovering meanings	
Allowing pupils space to question and probe the subject	

Unit 6 Appendix 2



Activity C (Small group discussion)

Post-lesson Conference Plan

What will be your opening statement / question?

How will you start the conference so that it encourages discussion and focuses on important issues?

What questions will be raised about the main focus of the lesson?

Was the main focus of the lesson clear? Was the lesson taking into account pupils' prior learning and building on it? Was the main focus of the lesson worth learning?

What questions will be raised about the pupils' learning?

Did the pupils learn anything? Did all the pupils learn in this lesson? What is your evidence?

What changes will you suggest need to be made to this lesson if taught again?

Could the focus of the lesson be made clearer? Could the teaching strategies be improved?

What other issues do you want to raise about teacher's handling of the lesson?

Teacher-pupil interaction, teaching strategies, use of teaching aids, etc.
