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**GOAL SETTING AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT
IN AN EXAM-RESULT ORIENTED CULTURE**

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Introduction

In Chinese culture, public examination has been a way of life to get to a higher level in the society. People accept this as the proper route that they must go through if they are to be successful. As a result, many people in this culture view teachers and schools as means to help achieve the best examination score, so that one may get into higher education, and then make good money and/or have prestige. It is a challenge for Adventist schools to teach students of the public examination age group in a manner that can convey the Adventist education value.

Background

Historically, as early as ~550BC, about the Confucius' era, Chinese had used examination to select officials. Starting from the Tong Dynasty, ~600AD, according to the Encyclopedia compiled in Qing Dynasty (Tzi Hai, p889), China formulated a countrywide elaborated public examination system called For Ju (□ □) to select officials. Until now, in 2008, public examinations are still used to select people for tertiary education. With over 2500 years of history of examination, culturally, it was ingrained in Chinese people mind that: One gets educated to prepare for examination. Then take examination to get ahead. See Figure 1, which shows the relevant timeline of events with reference to western historical events.

The For Ju exam system required lots of memorization from the examinees, making quotations of passages from memory to apply to answers of contemporary issues and to apply to one's own composition. Because there were so many volumes of books to commit to memory, examinees would customarily try to guess the area being tested for this particular session of examination and just concentrate to study there. Examinees also tried to go through mock exams and old exam papers as a method of preparation.

During the Qing Dynasty, there was an educational reform, promoting the idea "be educated to save the country". But the movement was not successful and it got changed into, as Chien (1977, p84) noted, "run a competition style education". Under such education policy, for example, 1970 in Taiwan, students competed to be the top 70% from primary to enter junior high, competed to be the top 60% of junior high to senior high school, and top 20% of senior high school to university, all based on public examinations.

Similar "Exam mechanism" is still used to select candidates for tertiary education in areas with Chinese are a major ethnic group, e.g. Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, and Malaysia. Their students in F5 (=grade 11), Senior 3 (=F6 =grade 12), or F7 (=grade 13 = college freshman) have to sit for public examination or college entrance examination to see if they can get in higher education, in what field, and in what brand name school. Depending on the location, only 7 to 15% of the top score getters get in. In Hong Kong during 2007, for example, only the top ~8% scorers got into local universities (HKEAA report) Students who got in were viewed as accomplished students. Those who did not, shattered. There had been cases of students committing suicide or getting mentally collapsed after receiving less than ideal public examination results.

The attitude of Chinese studying diligently and shrewdly for examination got carried to many other tests as well. For example: For Written portion of Driver License Exam, there is a “tien su” (the answer book from heaven, 天書) in San Francisco Chinatown. For US Citizenship Exam, there is also a “tien su” among the Chinese Community. For SAT, Chinese descent study for it, improve exam technique by drilling on mock tests, to a point that they get really good grades. For TOEFL, Shanghai students would go to “TOEFL prep class”, not English class. This kind of exam taking mindset resulted in sad social situations. E.g. in Singapore primary school students expressed that they are afraid of failing public exam more than the death of their parents. Some Macau students as young as 3rd grade studying until midnight to get an early start in examination preparation. That is sad, isn't it !

Big Challenge Created Due To This Exam Mechanism

The examination mechanism has created lots of challenges for educators in these areas. Let's take Hong Kong as an example. Local tertiary education enrollment space is rather limited. Therefore, the F7 A Level Exam is used as a tool to weed out those who are not-so-exam-oriented. The percentage of failure of A Level Exam is so high that many HK students are afraid to positively set a goal for tertiary education. They are in the “wait and see, pending on result of A Level Exam” mode. When there is no goal, there is no direction in life.

Another kink about this A Level Exam system is one may not get to study the desired major, as one must attain certain score in certain subjects before being allowed to take certain major in local universities. Therefore, students are even less willing to set a goal for the interest of their life, lest they fail to reach the goal and the disappointment will be big. Some majors are therefore being dubbed “majors for the second class” and because of “face” issue, these majors are not as attractive psychologically.

As a way to protect their “faces”, students often do not want to show that they are trying hard to pass A Level Exam and many even manage to convince themselves not to try so hard. This will allow them to use “I just did not try hard enough” as an excuse when they do not do so well in the examination. Otherwise, if people know that they tried hard, yet failed, then they will likely be labeled “not a college student material”. Furthermore, this denial also allows them to get comforted psychologically and say to themselves that the not so ideal examination result is caused by not adequate preparation and is not their inability (Appendix A).

There are generally more quantity of questions than one can finish within the given time period unless the examinees mainly just regurgitate per similar questions memorized. Because there are do much to study and memorize, students are focused in preparing the A Level Exam. They will complain about a teacher if that teacher does not know the syllabus of the subject taught well, or a teacher does not know clearly the format in which similar questions of this subject in A Level Exam are asked. Other items of complaint can be: a teachers not teaching per the exam syllabus, a teacher not using enough A Level Exam like questions in the lecture, a teachers not strong in picking possible questions for A Level Exam, and a teachers not able to provide standard answers to questions of past examinations.

Since higher score can truly be achieved by having help from high power tutor who can pick the likely questions and diligently studying per the syllabus, having higher score may not guarantee a

person is better in the subject. Sometimes, it just shows the person has prepared well for the examination. In fact, some good scorers may not be so too good at other things except to take the examinations.

Even Bigger Challenge for Adventist Mission Schools and Teachers

Most students do not come from Adventist homes which share our value of holistic education. In Hong Kong and Macau, for example, 88% to 98% are not. Parents' and students' objective is mainly to obtain the best scores in public examinations, so students can get into the very limited enrollment space of the most prestigious local university. This way, they have to pay only the less expensive local tertiary education fee, and then attain their vocational goal. Adventist value is the last thing they care about. We, as educators, cannot just say we do not want this kind of students, which are the majority.

Whenever a subject is not a subject in public examination, students will have very little interest in it. Even though Bible is a compulsory subject, but Bible is NOT a subject for A Level Exam. Therefore, there is No interest in Bible as a subject. Definitely then there is no interest about Biblical facts. As a rule of thumb, whenever a teacher spends some time to related material in subject matter to religious matter to a point that it was perceived as talking about things outside of the examination syllabus, it is likely that the school will hear disgruntles from students, and even from the parents' level. Hence, practicing integration of faith and learning in this environment is difficult.

Students view those who are able to teach them to take public examinations as good teachers. Teachers spending time to give public examination like tests are praised by parents. Teachers teaching students extra things outside of examination perimeter, such as to be good citizens, are being reported as wasting class time. On the other hand, teachers are well respected by students if they can guide them to get high score. (In the tutorial business of "exam prep", the capability to guide students for higher exam scores means higher pay). All these affect the mind of teachers, especially teachers committed to the value of Adventist holistic education.

SDA schools usually do not produce students who are high score getters. Most SDA workers (include teachers) do not send their own children to SDA schools. Probably it was due to, or at least partially due to, not wanting association with fellow students of lower score and be taught by teachers who are not known as good teachers for examination preparation. Some students are not happy about enrolling in our mission schools and would rather be in a brand name school, at least when they first came in. Under that situation, it is difficult to develop a sense of belonging.

It can be difficult sometimes to convince good quality Adventist teachers that they need to gain students' confidence by showing that they know the syllabus in their teaching, as this is so much in conflict with what they were trained to do and what they believe in as educators. The school received complaints about Adventist teachers, especially non-local Adventist teachers, for not knowing the examination syllabus or not teaching in manner that directly prepare students for public examination. On the other hand, for the non-Adventist teachers, the school must also help them to balance so they will not to go overboard in the other direction.

Theory of Motivation

Motivation is an extremely important factor. A person with motivation is willing to put extra effort so to achieve a goal; a person without, will not. As McNerney (2000, p107,108) noted, when students grow older, it is more difficulty to motivate them in activities in which they had not been very successful, as they believe ability is relatively fixed at this age and many avoid putting effort simply to avoid being labeled “dumb”. Most of our students had not been high scorers in previous public examinations. Therefore, the using the motivation that there is satisfactory for being better scorers is usually not there. Without valid motivation, one will not spend the effort to get better score.

McNerney (2000, p36) also stated that motivation of improvement has three characteristics: 1) **Mastery Characteristics** (e.g. I want to do better than I have done on previous attempts). 2) **Performance Characteristics** (e.g. I want to do better than anyone else) and 3) **Social Characteristic** (e.g. I want to do well/better to please someone). In the present case of getting motivated to do better in public examination, only **Mastery** and **Social** are applicable characteristics. **Performance**, on the other hand, is not. This is because many of the students have tried various public examinations in their life and knew from experience that they were not the high “performance” type.

Applying the Mastery characteristic: We make use of the fact that, internally, many students are not so happy with their previous public examination results, and they do want to get a better exam result than the last, even though they try not to show that desire externally, especially to their peers. (Please see Appendix B, which lists the evidence showing that students do want better result of public examinations despite their seemingly indifferent appearance). Therefore, to eliminate the fear of losing yet another time to someone else who can do better examination, one is just trying to outperform oneself, and definitely, one’s performance will not be compared to others. If there is indeed a better result, one can rightfully be proud of one’s improvement. In fact, one can even proudly tell one’s peers about the improvement without feeling bragging about oneself, as the desire to improve over one’s old self is a much nobler act than the desire of outperforming others. Many students generally will not show outwardly the desire to outperform others, as it is a quick way to loss friends. But one will not mind showing the desire to improve oneself.

Applying the Social characteristic: We make use of the fact that, deep down, many students want to do well in public examinations for this will please their parents. It is rooted within the Chinese culture and the Philosophy of Confucianism to please one’s parents. Parents feel proud of their kids’ good exam result. Most people in this society, even though quite unrelated in real life, seem to equate good examination result to the measurement of how high a degree of honoring and obedience is from their children to parents. Relative and friends will compliment the parents using expression such as “your child is so good in honoring you” when their children get good examination result. For that reason, parents of students having good examination result feel that they have “face” among their relatives and friends. Please note, in here, parents are also asked to appreciate more on the improvement of examination result of their children, and not to emphasize only at being the top percentage of score getters.

Basic Principle of Approaches Tried

With the understanding of what challenge the students and teachers are facing, application of motivation theory, and the fact that human being generally are more willing to accept advices which have obvious immediate benefit, we set forth to approach this matter based on the following basic principle:

- 1) We should first fulfill the students' immediate needs of wanting to do better in public examinations.
- 2) We help students to re-gain their courage to set goal for success and show the advantage of setting a goal.
- 3) We help students to develop faith in God so to give comfort and lessen their fear in taking public examinations.
- 4) We help teachers by giving training and psychological preparation and try to have people around students noticed other values of the students. Our teachers need guidance to balance out in this dilemma of oxymoron.

At first glance, some of the above principles may seem like we try to motivate a person by satisfying one's selfish purpose and thus it may seem "worldly". How would this allow us to maintain our Adventist educational identity and foster our educational mission, for which the final objective is "To restore in man the image of his maker" as stated by White (1903, p15)? Jesus made filling human's need as priority when was on this earth. During His ministry on this earth, He also cared about satisfying immediate human need first, starting with the first miracle of proving more drinks for a wedding feast. Therefore, we boldly make that a needed step as a starter, for this will get students' attention.

Setting the Stage to Help

To prepare the stage to help students, we must let them feel that we care about them and let them know that Adventism is a caring religion. We, the teachers and staff in this school, care about their immediate need, which is to obtain a better exam result than what they had previously. Make it known that they may come by to talk to us and seek advices about the matters any time. We must also make them feel that we do not label them because of their previous public examination result or what are perceived as their future public examination result, for we are not like others in this examination result oriented culture.

Firstly, we must have the discipline to avoid being over zealous in "winning them over" that we keep students so long that they feel their precious time to prepare for public examination is wasted when we talk to them. For this will make them turn their "ears off" before we even have the chance to engage in any meaningful contact. The age group of the public examination youth we are dealing with is the Generation Y age group (Wikipedia, Generation Y). They are relatively impatient and they will go find their own way if they feel your way is not efficient. Asian youth are similar except they are more reserved in expressing impatience outwardly. Nevertheless, whenever they perceive that a conversation is too time-consuming, it is likely that a barrier of communication will be erected. After having such barrier, further communication will be difficult.

Secondly, since helping students to improve their public examination result is truly our interim goal, then let them feel and see that we are indeed trying to help them to reach that goal. It is not something which we should hide because we feel uncomfortable about it. Granted though, this is not the final goal of our teaching objective, but this is a needed step for us to reach the students. Furthermore, this indirectly tells them that we care about them.

Thirdly, when discussing issues in Bible, select messages that comfort students. Relate the message to the possible benefit in their life. Do this at least at this stage of the students' spiritual life. Avoid deeply doctrinal messages. It is better to convey moral lessons instead of teaching biblical knowledge for the time being.

Main Messages: Set Goal and Develop Faith

Bring out the following messages to students in Bible class, and in other classes or even after class, when appropriate. Please note that it is of utmost importance to encourage students to truly set a goal instead of operating in a "wait to see the result of public examination" mode.

Set goal: Many desirable jobs in the society require tertiary education. But because students are so afraid that they are unable to qualify for entrance into local universities due to not so ideal examination result, they do not want to set goal for their life anymore. They need to be constantly encouraged, and then be reminded, that it is to their benefit to set goals for their life. Let them know it happens that setting goal is also biblical. Use as many Bible class periods as needed to discuss this topic. Have a math teacher come to Bible class to give a mathematical proof that in random walk (i.e. walk without goal or a defined direction), one can on an average only reach a distance which is the square root of the number the number of steps walked from the origin. On the other hand, walking with a defined direction, one can reach a maximum distance equal to the number of step walked. Furthermore, point out that Bible also advises in Phil 3:13-14 that, "We forget things which are behind. Reach forward for things which are ahead. Press toward the goal." It is important to let bygone be bygone (i.e. let go of the hurt of previous bad examination result). Reach forward to try again with courage and self confidence. For many students, this very first step of again willing to set a goal to try for a target can be very difficult. It takes encouragement from many teachers and staff.

Make attainable goal: One should set goal which is attainable and not to set goal on something having only very little chance to succeed. For if one fails the disappointment can be quite destructive to one's confidence. An example of this can be: one may set goal to get a better score on the A Level exam than the last public exam. But one may not want to set a goal that requires the score of the A Level exam to be so high that to be within the top 8% of the exam takers and thus one may enter HK University for tertiary education. Another example can be one may set a goal to enroll in HKAC for US style tertiary education upon finishing A Level exam. In that case, one only needs to concentrate in scoring well in the A Level exam English Usage. This is more within reach than passing at least four subjects simultaneously. (As of Jan/2007, the HK Government approved HKAC to run an AU affiliation degree programs in Religion and Psychology. That means this tertiary education operating in HKAC can lead to HK approved US credits or HK recognized US bachelor degrees, as long as the applicants enter into the program with a satisfactorily completed HK form 6 and a score of D in A Level Exam English Usage. This goal has much higher than the 8% chance success rate).

Comforting students: Due to the high flunk out rate of public examinations which students have to face, they are scared (see Appendix B). Therefore, in Bible class, instead of talking about biblical facts which are not in public examinations and thus they do not care much, discuss scripture passages that comfort students. Relate how these passages could possibly benefit them as a student now and later in life. Have them write their reaction/response to the passages, for this is both therapeutic emotionally and a good practice of English usage. Also, expressing out their emotion tends to lessen their insecurity about the matter. Introduce the concept of asking God for help in prayer. Other Asian religions such as Buddhism and Taoism require one to give repeated offering or fervently worship their gods before one will receive blessings. On the other hand, Christianity in general, including the Adventist Christianity, requires nothing except going to God and simply ask/pray. This is a rather refreshing concept for a major percentage of the students who are born into Asian religions which believe that one must do some sacrificing to win blessings from gods. Listed below are examples of some comforting scripture passages which we used and students appreciated:

“Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” I Peter 5:7

“...My peace I give unto you...Let not your heart be...afraid.” John 14:27

“...He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” John 6:37

Faith & feeling less anxiety: Many of the students are not effective exam takers, for they have what McInerney (2000, p105) mentioned as *state anxiety*, a state of mind due to anxiety, making the person not performing well when being evaluated in a test situation. This is especially true for some students when the test situation is a public examination environment. From conversations with students, it was known that many of them had previously enrolled in special tutorial sessions attempting to learn to control their anxiety and to be more effective exam takers. Unfortunately, their continued less-than-ideal exam result made them even less self-confident and created more anxiety. Most Adventist teachers and some Christian teachers willingly convey the concept that anxiety can be lessened by trusting God for help; i.e. leaving things that we may not have control to God. Teachers invite students to attend the mid week prayer band where they can learn more about this faith. Teachers attend the prayer band meeting with this group of students. Some teachers even jokingly told students “If prayer does not help, one has nothing to loss. If that helps, one has everything to gain”. Furthermore, during Bible class, students were told the many benefits of Praying; how believing in God will answer prayer that can reduce anxiety and thus increase one’s self confidence.

Honor one’s parents: Whether in Bible class or other classes, have teachers made a conscious effort to point out to students that it is proper for them to honor their parents. It is biblical teaching that one should honor one’s parents, as this is the Fifth Commandment. It is also the teaching of Confucius, and part of the Chinese culture to honor one’s parents. Since doing better in public examination is an extremely good way to give their parents the feeling that they are being honored (as culturally good exam result from children was usually perceived as obedience), students should come right out and tell their parents that they are trying to do better to make parents happy but not able to get into the top few percents does not mean they are honoring the parents less. All teachers, whether Adventist or otherwise, are very supportive of conveying this idea to students.

Avoid deep doctrines: If there is a potentially lengthy discussion of doctrine even if the discussion was initiated by some students as questions, try to do it after class, as this will avoid

losing the majority of the students who are generally very focused on the material in the examination syllabus. In Bible class, teachers may also convey some moral lesson issues, as students will see that as useful also. But teachers should minimize teaching biblical facts, as students will perceive that as not useful because they are not in A Level Exam, College Entrance Exam, or being so applicable to life. Also, for whatever message being discussed, avoid being confrontational, as most of the students are non-Christian and/or non-Adventist thus far in their lives. Give them time to digest and just pray that one day they may accept our beliefs and values. It should be noted that winning a debate can often lead to losing listeners for later discussion for a long time.

Origin of world: Students taking college entrance public examination are knowledgeable young people with thinking ability. Let us take Hong Kong as an example, F6 and F6 students are usually the upper half achievers of F5 graduates. By the end of F7, they usually have the technical knowledge of US style college sophomore level. Just that they have very little guidance in how to apply these knowledge except to use them in taking examination. Therefore, as in the case of many educated persons, questions on our origin, creation and evolution will come up. Some of the examples of the issues being brought up are: Is the age of this earth ~6000yrs as accounted biblically? How does Adventist reconcile our account of creation with scientific evidence from tree rings, various dating methods, to findings in astronomy/Hubble telescope? We find it is best to answer this with the idea of Webster (Christ in Classroom, Vol 11, p295), which essentially says that: The Adventist Church as a whole accepts creation as accounted in Bible based on our faith in God as our creator. It is true that we cannot fully explain some scientific findings within the biblical account of creation as interpreted by the Adventist Church presently but this is merely the limitation of human knowledge. There are plenty of conflicts and plenty of findings that other models on the existence of matters in this world cannot explain either. Emphasize that the relation with God and relation with fellow man are the most important points. We believe that there is a creator God and it is difficult to deny that. Having such a God, then we have moral law originated from Him and value in life is therefore perceived. Do not get into any confrontational mode. Rather, invite students to see all unexplained conflicts as stimulations for studying higher education, during which they can search for better explanation and new discovery.

Adventist life style: In Bible class, take time to explain the benefit of Adventist diet and life style. Relate it to the fact that it can indeed help one to perform better in life, including even public examinations. As Jennings (2007, p9, 10) mentioned, when eating the NEWSTART diet, it actually detoxifies the body and allowed a person, body and brain, to function better. The NEWSTART health principle minimizes the chance of a person getting sick and thus gives that person more productive time to prepare for examination. Quote the story of Daniel and his friends not eating the King's meat as an example. Also, give the theory of resting on Sabbath is good for human or other working animals and the principle of sabbatical year in planting as an example of maximizing the best use of reserve energy. Having Sabbath rest allows one to perform at one's maximum. Also, the mid week prayer band is a quiet time of relaxing music and prayer which in this short time is a time well spent for rejuvenation.

Supplementary Messages: Value in Life

Convey the following supportive messages so to influence the students' view about themselves.

Other things of value in Life: During Bible class convey the idea that there are other things in life, other than getting good exam scores, that one may gain a sense of value of self. Our value as human being is not achievement dependent. Firstly, God values us so much that Jesus gave up heaven to come to this world to die for us so we may be saved. Secondly, without talking about God, we may also gain self value through helping others, or feeling being needed by others. For that, we set up the Service Education program to helping Elderly, Orphans, and Asian minority ethnic groups, etc. Furthermore, we invited students to participate in church, giving special music, taking parts in worship programs, and performing as musical tour. All these assure them that they have self worth, for they have contributed and they are needed. Lastly, students are explained the theory of multiple intelligence as described by Kagan et al (1998, p3, 4). A person's intelligence is not evaluated by written public examination alone. There are different kinds of intelligence which public examination cannot evaluate, such as intelligence in kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal areas, which are also important in life.

Be satisfied: It should be noted that when coming to our mission schools, many students were feeling hurt psychologically. This is because many F6 and F7 students come to our school not as their first choice. They come mainly because they do not have high enough public examination scores to go to a brand name school. Therefore, some of the students were not happy about their predicament and translated the feeling into dissatisfaction about virtually everything. There were lots of complaints when they first entered our mission schools, especially for students who originally enrolled in brand name schools and just that they failed their F5 public examination and thus they cannot be in a brand name school any more. Frankly, however, this is really a way to expressing their self-pity. We help them to get out of this feeling of dissatisfaction by helping them to build a sense of belonging and to feel useful in the present place. Build sense of belonging via prayer groups where they can share feelings. Feel useful by helping the school (e.g. recruitment, campus beautification, etc.). With that, gradually the feeling of self-pity diminishes and comes the feeling of being satisfied about enrolling in their present school.

Change the Surrounding for Students

There is no possible way to change the thinking of all the surrounding people around the students. But we hope to, at least, provide a "kinder" environment when the students are with the school.

Teach by example: Encourage teachers to be a live witness of faith and care. White (2004, p221) aptly stated that genuine faith is always followed by love. Teachers are encouraged to show their faith by attending prayer band meetings with students and to show love and care by giving special tutorials for public exam preparation whenever possible.

Educating teachers: Seymour et al (1982, p133) noted that in order for teachers to help to influence students for a new line of thinking, teachers need to change their thinking first. For F5, F6 and F7 teachers in our mission schools, 50% to 67% are non-Adventist. Therefore, properly preparing teachers to have the mindset to help students to get better exam result without compromising the Adventist education objective is essential. Two groups of teachers need this

preparation: 1) Teachers who do not believe in teaching for the purpose of student taking public examination. These are usually teachers who did not grow up in the exam result oriented culture. 2) Teachers who do not have much belief in the benefit of Adventist faith and life style. These are usually teachers who are non-Adventists. Both groups need to be assured that the combination of our approaches used can indeed help students. For some of the mission schools, we were able to conduct retreats and training. For example: a) Health retreats to experience the Adventist health message and life style first hand; b) Teacher workshops with teachers of other mission schools in the area; c) Multiple intelligent seminar and workshop so that teachers have a better firsthand understanding and ways the 8 different intelligences – verbal & linguistic, logical & Math, visual & spatial, musical & rhythmic, bodily & kinesthetic, naturalist, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Students can be better convinced of their value regardless of their public examination result. Furthermore, in teacher morning worship, convey to teachers the message of experiencing personal faith, assure them that it is OK to teach students for taking public examination as a beginning step for now so that students may re-gain their self-confidence. Because, as noted by Wood (1998, p279) students can learn indirectly other issues in life because of accomplishing this major task. After this step, many other educational ideal can be taught. For teachers who are weak in the knowledge and teaching of examination syllabus, give training in the area. Give easy access to plenty of sample and old examination papers with standard answers, so teachers may efficiently quote from the pool of mock questions.

Comforting teachers: People of the exam result oriented society judge the accomplishment of teachers of F5, F6 and F7 students by how well their students do in public examinations. Since many of our students are not high scorers, the society does not view our teachers as highly rated teachers either. Teachers feel that they are being looked down upon by their outside peers. Our teachers need to be comforted and thus they can better positively influence students. Posters in office, during morning worships and during teacher meetings, words of encouragement are deliberately brought to them. Examples of some phrases of comfort used, quoted from a teacher notebook compiled by Lai (2004, p17, 60, 72) are listed below:

Be kinder and be more patient to both others and yourself.
One of the hardest knowledge to acquire is to self-critique accurately.
The good point about one's imperfection is it leads to the joy of growth

Educate surrounding people: For the group of people having contact with students frequently, generally there is no easy way to contact them. Therefore, needless to say, it is difficult to educate them so they may see another way to view things that is independent of examination result. We do, however, have access to parents and families of students, teachers and staff of the school. Therefore, we set forth to change the views of parents by calling parent meetings which we encourage attendance of the whole family. We showed the family members activity photos and videos of students that have to do with community service and helping others. Hopefully this is at least a good start in changing the value system of people around the students.

Result

The above approaches were tried in two schools (9) in areas of exam-result oriented culture. The outcomes are listed below:

School No.1

For this school, the college entrance public exam is at F6 level. The years executing the above approach are from 1998 to 2004. Within that period, the school conducted at least teacher training sessions annually.

Indicator	Observation
% of students in the class having public exam result qualifying them to enter university	11% in 1998. Increased to 48% in 2004
Student enrollment of F5 and F6 of the school year	Fluctuating within 80 +/- 5 students No visible trend of increase or decrease observed. This is likely because the population of F5 and F6 age group decreased significantly from 1998 to 2004.
# of baptisms per year from the F5 and F6 group	3 +/- 1

Please note that for this school the percentage of students acquiring university entrance qualification has increased over 4 folds. This is very significant. Granted, however, some of the increase may be due to the fact that there was some increment of enrollment space of local university and simultaneously there was a drop in population of university entry age group.

School No.2

For this school, the college entrance public exam is A Level Exam. It is at F7 level. The years executing the above-mentioned approach are from 2005 to 2008. Within that period, the school conducted less than ideal sessions of teacher training.

Indicator	Observation
% of students in the class passing the college entrance public exam (depending on the scores of others, this does not automatically mean that one will be guaranteed a space in an local university)	Fluctuate within 8% +/- 1% No visible trend of increase or decrease observed. This is likely because teachers were not getting better trained in teaching per exam syllabus
Student enrollment of F6 and F7 of the school year	105 students in 2005. Increase to 330 students in 2008. Significant number of new students are recruited by word of mouths of old students
# of baptisms per year from the F6 and F7 group	1 or 0

Please note that for this school the enrollment for F6 and F7 increases three folds in 3 years. This is an extremely good increase, considering the fact that total number of youth available for F6 and F7 of the area was on the decrease somewhat. And there was less than ideal training sessions for teachers. That could have caused the non-improvement of percent of students passing the public examination.

Next Step

We must continue to give training to our teachers, so that they are better equipped for the challenging environment.

Meanwhile, I believe we should also take steps to comfort our teachers by giving them the on going salary rate. Presently, our teachers are paid ~75% of the on-going rate of their peers. A lower salary scale has an implication to make everyone, including him/herself, feel that the person is less qualified than others. We know that is not true, as they are just more dedicated. But that, nevertheless, affects one's mind, regardless how dedicated one is.

Lastly, I believe we need to change the mindset of the evaluator of teachers. In school board meetings, the exam result statistic of the school is given in the academic report, subject exam statistics are given in teaching staff evaluation reports. School board members question the performance of the school if there is a lower percentage. They also question the competency of a teacher when his/her percentage is lower. This gives a wrong signal to our teaching staff and must be changed.

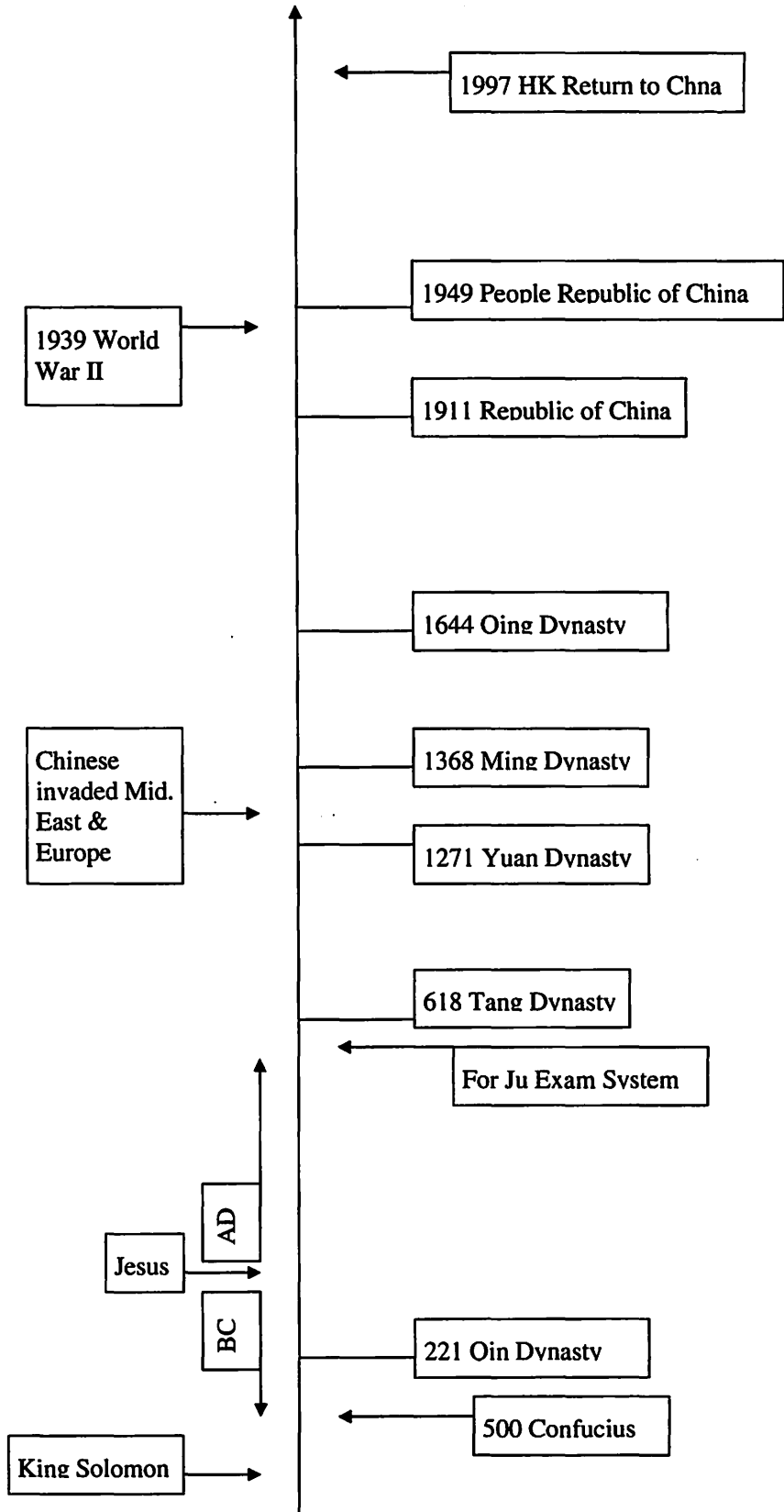
Conclusion

From the above result, I believe the approaches tried are probably helpful schemes for helping students with integration of faith and learning in an exam-result oriented culture. The schemes are based on the same concept that Jesus used when he was down on this world, i.e. meet the need of the person being helped as the priority. Furthermore, worker's training is important.

Presently, sitting for some kind of written examination and passing it to get somewhere or get a certificate has become more prevalent as a process to achieve certain step. It is likely that more areas of the world will use examination to determine the ability and thus the future of an individual, as it is an easy way to give some kind of relatively objective evaluation to a large number of people. As a result, more of our schools worldwide will likely be in areas where exam results and brand name schools are important. Furthermore, as the concept of brand name product and fame become more important in one's mind, going to brand name school will also become something people sought after too.

Using schemes mentioned above as a reference may be a good starting point for similar situation you may encounter.

Fig. 1 Timeline from Confucius, to the beginning of exam system, and then to modern day exam



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Appendix A – Survey of a sample F7 population

Survey of 07-08 F7 students in Hong Kong Adventist College. 170 students returned questionnaires. That was an anonymous survey. Only the issues of interests are listed below:

When not explicitly mentioned, the data counting is from the population of 170 students.

We found 20 of the 34 answerers of Yes of Question #4 (i.e., Plan to go for tertiary education?) expressed that they want to enroll elsewhere. That seems to imply that those who set their mind to attend university, majority of them seem to see that other school can give them a better chance to get them a better A Level Exam result and thus a higher chance of getting accepted by a university.

#	Questions being asked	Survey result	Remark
1	Are you happy about your public exam (HKCEE) result?	Yes = 3(1.8%) No = 165(97.2%) No answer = 2(1%)	Overwhelming majority, are not happy.
2	Why do you think your result is not so good?	Not prepared enough = 131(79.4%) Too difficult = 11(6.7%) Exam anxiety = 13(7.9%) Others = 10 (6%)	Counting only answers from the No's in #1. Exam anxiety % is much higher when asked by school counselor.
3	Do you want to do better on A Level Exam?	Yes = 113(68.5%) No = 0 Don't care = 52(31.5%)	Counting only answers from the No's in #1 Counselor found many who said don't care do care deep down inside.
4	Want to set a goal for what to do when you get out of F7?	Yes = 34(20%) No = 19(11.2%) Wait for A Lvl Exam = 109(64.1%) Others = 8(4.7%)	Almost 2/3 wants to wait for A Level Exam result before making decision
5	Plan to go for tertiary education?	Yes = 34(20%) No = 24(14.1%) Wait for A Lvl Exam = 104(61.2%) Other = 8(4.7%)	All those decided their goals are those wanting to go for tertiary educ.
6	Are you happy enrolling in here?	Yes = 96(56.4%) No = 71(41.8%) No answer = 3(1.8%)	This question was asked after F7 was here for 1 sch yr and 2 mo. Yes answers are estimated to be much lower 1 yr ago. 14 of the No comes from the Yes answerers of #4
7	If you were given a chance to change school at the beginning of F7, will you change?	Yes = 21(29.6%) No = 31(43.7%) Depend on what sch = 15(21.1%) Others = 4(5.6%)	Counting only answers from the No's in #6 15 of the Yes and 5 or the Depend on what sch come from the Yes answerers of #4
8	Do you believe God can help you, even for A Level Exam?	Yes = 45(26.5%) No = 68(40%) Don't know = 53(31.2%) No answer = 4(2.3%)	Over 25% expressed they believe God can help. From the growing attendance of prayer band, we believe this % would have been lower 1 yr ago.

Appendix B – Inductive Evidence of Wanting Better Exam Result

In Hong Kong Adventist College F6 and F7 students, especially F6 students, do want better public examinations result despite their seemingly indifferent appearance. In front of their peers, however, they put on a mask that they do not very diligently study at home to prepare for the A Level Exam but there are subtle evidence that they do care about getting better exam result.

1) They and their parents would complain about a teacher if they perceive that a teacher is not teaching per the A Level Exam syllabus and therefore worry that it will affect their preparation of the examination. Generally, youth at that age do not talk to their parents about anything unless that thing is very important. For the numbers of times HKAC received complaints from parents and from students about this kind of matters, it is natural to conclude that these youth, who complained by themselves or via parents, care about preparing for public examination to have better exam result.

2) Data from counseling office indicates that quite a few students discussed their fear of not able to do well on the A Level Exam and that their parents will be very upset. They sought advice on whether to attend any more tutorials for “exam prep”. If they attended and made their family pay the extra tuition fee, but are not able to get a better result than HKCEE they took last time, then their parents will be mad at them.

3) From the anonymous survey described in Appendix, 68% want better result. This is a significant majority.

4) When I was on duty in Macau, making educational observation on tours sponsored by Macau Government Education Dept, DSEJ, visiting Taiwan, Mainland China (Zhuhai, QuangZhou, Shanghai, HangZhou, Beijing), Singapore, Macau, and Hong Kong, local educators I contacted told of how serious the students are in preparing for public examinations.

5) Primary students in Singapore were asked what would they afraid more, doing badly in public examination or the death of their parents. Students elected death of their parents as the one which they are less afraid of.

Youth growing up in this vicious exam-result oriented culture are captive prey. They are under tremendous among of stress. They want to do well on the examination so that they may see a future. They are afraid that they cannot do well and thus their parents are not pleased. They are afraid to openly prepare for it and yet fail then they will be negatively labeled.