

EDUCATION FOR ALL
ALL FOR EDUCATION

不一樣的教育 **Education 2.1**

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Preamble: Education for the New Era

Society has changed! The World has changed!

Globalization, economy transformation, technology advancements, social disparity, generational difference, a rising China, have all contributed to a future which is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.

The change in the economic dynamics, unpredictability of careers, rapid changes in family relations, lightning breakthroughs in technologies, infiltration of the new media, and so on, have posed unprecedented challenges to human lives, and indeed has caused changed values and norms in the new era. Meanwhile, the changes have also brought about new horizons and new hopes for life.

However, to the younger generation, all these have created new opportunities to breaking away from the conventions, finding their own selves, exploring new possibilities, and identifying new way of serving society. They are emerging as a new generation with new meaning of life, living with new aspirations.

They face tasks of learning apt to the new era. They look forward to education of a different kind.

In that context, we come together, with Hong Kong's future in mind, and herewith offer our observations, expectations and suggestions, in anticipation of attentions and discussions leading to favourable changes.

Our focus: People Quality

Our focus of attention is on people, the quality of people. That should be the prime aim of education. People quality pertains to:

Substantial Knowledge: in order to form the rational basis for work and life: trilingual and bi-literal competency; T-shape knowledge – broad knowledge base and deep understanding of a specific knowledge area; knowledge to master technologies, but also to go beyond technologies; knowledge in the geography, economy, history, and culture about society, the nation and the world.

Knowledge is largely learnt through the formal curriculum, but is now learnt also through the

media, through self-learning.

Comprehensive Attributes: in order to survive, serve, thrive and reform: critical thinking, team spirit, appreciation of difference, perseverance, creativity, humility and self-confidence, self-management and self-control, and so forth.

Attributes are developed through experiential learning, in classrooms and schools and beyond, in society, and also through cross-society learning in Mainland China and overseas.

Respectable Values: in order to create a better future and lead a meaningful life: integrity, responsibility, commitment, caring, respect of different values, tolerance of diversity, justice, rule of law, peace, and so on.

Values are formed through implicit learning, influenced by school cultures, teachers' role models, the media and other tacit exposures.

Suggestion 1:

Expand the space for learning, change the exam-oriented culture

Examinations and admissions to higher education have consumed much of students' time and energy. Schools, teachers, parents and society at large should join efforts to cause a change in the exam-oriented culture. Such a culture prevails because of the public examination, but also dominates schools at all levels. There is a need to reduce unnecessary competitions and screening and minimize their impact, so as to create more space for students' active learning. Examinations should serve students' learning, not the contrary.

1.1 Re-conceptualize examinations and assessments: emphases on application, creation, integration and collaboration.

Making full use of state-of-the-art concepts and technologies, fundamentally re-think the aims and forms of examination and assessments within schools and in public examinations. Achieve transformation from assessing "what students know" to encouraging application, integration, creation and collaboration. Turn examinations into a meaningful activity, bring back the purposes of learning and minimize negative pressures.

1.2 Further modify DSE, create greater flexibility

Continue with the progress in improving DSE, reduce the syllabuses to only the essential, so that candidates would have more flexibility. Further simplify school-based assessment. It is also

conceivable to experiment the mode of DSE, so that early sitting could be allowed for some of the papers, e.g. English and Applied Learning.

1.3 Re-shape university admissions

More resources and deliberations should be put into university admissions. Apart from examination scores, students' other various learning experiences should be respected. School recommendations and interviews should be more widely adopted in order to encourage the students' comprehensive development. It has to be borne in mind that university admissions bear immense impact on secondary schools and modifying. University should take change in admissions as a matter of social responsibility.

Suggestion 2: Create equitable multiple paths for further study

Post-secondary education is now no longer limited to a few. However, only a small percentage of students enjoy government subsidy. Equity is at stake. Hong Kong has come to a stage of development, and with its financial capability, we suggest extending government subsidy to the whole spectrum of accredited post-secondary programmes (e.g. professional training), so that student could move freely across institutions and across levels.

2.1 Increase government subsidy to post-secondary education, consider introduction of vouchers

Increase degree and sub-degree places, in order that students who would like to engage in further studies would not be limited by quota. It is also conceivable to introduce *vouchers*, so that students could benefit from any of the diverse paths offered through accredited programmes.

2.2 Promote credit-transfer among institutions

Credit-transfer among institutions is often readily on paper, but is practised only rarely. Institutions could earnestly make such transfer a reality. It is also possible to consider local student exchange programmes. The whole idea is to allow students to have more freedom of study across unnecessary institutional barriers.

2.3 Re-emphasise common core programmes and whole-person development

The change of the normal duration of university programmes from 3 to 4 years was intended to give room for students to learn comprehensively beyond disciplines. This is essential for the

whole person development of students. We expect universities to have more conscious use of the additional year for broader student learning.

Suggestion 3: Construct schools as learning communities, allow teachers to unleash their professional potentials, towards an international education hub

When students become active and self-actuated learners, teachers and schools face new challenges. Schools are seen as the facilitator of students' active learning, and coordinator of diverse learning experiences. Teachers are seen as professional designer and advisor to students' learning. These have been strong traditions in Hong Kong, but have to be reconfirmed by policies and resources. As such, Hong Kong could become one of the most advanced metropolitan education hub.

3.1 Towards an international Education Hub.

Hong Kong enjoys high international reputation in both basic and higher education, despite the dissatisfactions and challenges within Hong Kong. The geopolitical position of Hong Kong is both a blessing and a commitment. Hong Kong should play an education hub in the region, radiate its expertise as well as learning from other countries. Hong Kong could grow into a mature learning society.

a. Set an example of education for the new era

The Government, in conjunction with other institutions, should capitalize on Hong Kong's cross-cultural and multilingual advantages, and develop Hong Kong into a mature education hub that takes the lead in education research, international exchange and innovative breakthroughs in education.

b. Create more opportunities for principals and teachers for overseas learning and development

Significantly increase the opportunity for principals and teachers to undertake overseas study, exchange and experience, so that Hong Kong principals and teachers would become professionals equipped with global perspectives and are kept abreast of the most advanced development in education.

c. Strengthen learning in global citizenship

Provide students with essential learning opportunities about the geography, economy, culture and history of the world, and set standards for such learning. Enhance learning in global issues

such as environments, climate and health. Enable students to have broad experiences of service learning outside Hong Kong, greatly expand opportunities of overseas exchange, and encourage cross-border partnership of sister-schools.

d. Enhance EDB's championship

The EDB has an unreplaceable role for championship. It is essential for EDB to take a lead in building its professional capacity within the Bureau, collaborate with other government sectors, and make full use of the advisory mechanisms. It is also essential to restore the professional capability within the Bureau, which may include the reinstallation of a designated research arm, and the re-development of expertise in each learning areas. Meanwhile, the energy and wisdom of non-government initiatives and professional bodies should be embraced

e. Increase inter-sectorial understanding

The existing secondment system should be modified to enable members of EDB, HKEAA and teacher education institutions to work in schools and witness student learning at the grassroots. This is to make sure that policies, guidelines and programs in administration, curriculum, assessment and teacher/principal training are formulated with good knowledge and understanding of the frontline reality.

3.2 Schools: Professional Learning Communities

As students extend their learning experiences, school are committed to students' comprehensive development as a whole person, and play the coordinator of their learning experiences. Schools become a professional learning community with lofty missions.

a. Coordinator of Multiple Learning Experiences

School lives are no longer limited to classrooms. It is a strong tradition in Hong Kong where there are numerous and rich extra-curricular activities, intensive teacher counselling, and close interactions between teachers and students. However, students' learning activities now increasingly extend beyond the schools, to society, to the Chinese mainland and to overseas countries. Schools have the unreplaceable role of a comprehensive coordinator of all these practicum, experiential learning, and enculturation. Schools are no longer a place for purely "teaching", they are coordinators of learning experiences.

b. Enhance the tradition of School-Based Model

School-based Model in Hong Kong applies to all professional decisions in schools. It is a strong and favourable tradition. Policies should favour enhancing the model so that schools can fully

capitalise on their professional autonomy. In order for students to become masters of their own learning, schools have to be developed into a trusting, open and accommodating environment, so that students could fully enjoy the rich learning resources and a flexible learning environment.

c. Principal's leadership

Principals play a crucial leadership role in building their schools to become learning communities, in empowering their teachers and in developing their students. Principals are in the central position in coordinating and deploying resources within and outside schools. Principals are also in the unique position to rally support of the school sponsoring bodies, SMCs, and to mobilise the participation of parents, alumni and the general public.

d. Cultural Heritage

Hong Kong schools honour the Chinese tradition of conceptualizing education in five dimensions: moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic. It is anticipated that such traditional treasure would be strengthened with re-interpretations in the new era. Meanwhile, ample learning resources should be given to Chinese history and culture, so that ethnic Chinese could understand the deep unpinning of their own culture, and students of other ethnicity may appreciate the Chinese culture.

3.3 Teachers: Towards the best of their professional potentials

As mentioned, teachers' responsibilities have been extended way beyond classrooms. Teachers are crucial in student development in knowledge, attributes and values. Teachers need much more support than before in order to carry out their responsibilities and fulfil their missions. Among others, teachers care about students and teachers' learning are of prime importance.

a. Endorse the three roles of teachers advocated by COTAP¹

1. Caring growth facilitators – develop and actualize students' potentials and cultivate their positive values and attitudes in relation to family and the world.
2. Inspirational knowledge co-constructor – empower students with knowledge and skills for flourishing adulthood with fulfilling careers.
3. Committed role models of the teaching profession – pursue excellence and contribute to sustainable development of school and society.

b. Increase number of teachers, paraprofessionals and supporting staff

¹ Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals

With the much broadened remits, teachers are generally overloaded. It is a matter of urgency that the staff structure in schools be redesigned and the number of teachers substantially increased. Meanwhile, to release teachers from tedious non-professional routines, there should also be significant increase in para-professionals and supporting staff. Given the likely fluctuation of the school population, EDB, school-sponsoring bodies as well as schools should work out medium-term manpower plans, so that the professional stability of schools would not be compromised.

c. Re-design teachers' career ladder with clear rungs

Create of a career path for non-administrative promotions of talented teachers. Rectify the long-standing discrepancy where graduates are receiving non-graduate remunerations.

d. Expand opportunities for sabbaticals, encouraging continuous learning among teachers

Create opportunities for teachers to share their experience and develop new knowledge. Teacher should enjoy the professional right of "paid sabbatical" for continuous profession development. They should be enabled to undertake professional exchange, research and training, locally and outside Hong Kong, so has to widen their horizons.

3.4 Enrich the professional leadership of Teacher Education Institutions

TEIs are research and training institutions. They are the cradle for quality teachers and principals. TEIs should recruit more academics with frontline experiences in schools, especially with local experiences. Balance should be kept between research in education local and elsewhere. TEIs are given the mission to integrate theory with practice, and leadership of research among schools and kindergartens. Members of TEIs are expected to participate in local education policy discussions, but also to bring to Hong Kong the global frontiers of research and development in education.

Suggestion 4:

Develop a "Big Education" platform, optimize student experiences

We suggest the formation of a "Big Education" platform, with schools taking the lead, to connect various parties who are able to contribute to enriching the learning experience of students – government departments, higher education institutions, business sector, NGOs, media, religious and cultural bodies, so as to mobilize the whole spectrum of stakeholders, to participate, to care

and to contribute to education development. Thereby, we hope we could maximize students' learning experiences.

4.1 Coalition to provide experiential learning

To form a coalition of various sectors in society, in order to provide systematic, meaningful and effective experiential learning. There are readily in place different partnerships between schools and the business sector. The Platform could facilitate the sharing of experiences, enable effective communications, improve school-business matching, simplify procedures, and so forth, in order to optimize student learning experiences.

4.2 Maximize resources for student learning

The suggested platform would be able to mobilize and harness the rich resources – funds, manpower and venues – embedded in the community. It is also an opportunity to allow all parties to contribute to the all-round development of students. In this context, the government would also be expected to provide policies, funding, venues and support for the deprived.

4.3 Positive discrimination towards the deprived

Apply positive discrimination to help the deprived, with direct aid to the needy. Special attention is to be paid to children of ethnic minorities, so as to achieve harmony among different cultures, turning cultural diversity into a social asset.

4.4 Partnership between schools and the business sector

Promote 1-1 or N-1 partnership between business and deprived schools, with schools taking the initiative of matching or cross-sectorial collaborations, increase support to special education needs.

4.5 Harmonization among government departments

The proposed platform would not be possible without leadership of the government, particularly in harnessing various departments. It is also the government's obligation to set up mechanisms in order to encourage the business sector, NGOs, funding agencies, media and parents to join hands and contribute to education. In the end, it is to facilitate students' comprehensive learning; it is to enhance social equity.

Concluding

Society is continuously changing! The world is continuously changing!

Education is an essential factor for social development. Hong Kong has the ability to provide our students with the best learning environment, but that requires the collaboration of the entire society, participating and enhancing Hong Kong's education.

Education is also a prime responsibility for the government. It is essential that funding to education is genuinely regarded as an investment into the future, and not just a line in government budget. Given the changed demand on education, it is time for the government to have a refreshed plan for education, and to substantially increase investment in education.

Education is pervasive. It runs through all stages of human life, and it covers every corner of society. The above are only limited aspects which we think are critical at the moment, and deserve priority attention.

Hong Kong is internationally reputed for its education: the concepts, the system, the social alliance, and the unsatisfied quest for excellence. Let us work together, explore new directions and new paths, so that Hong Kong would become an even more mature and more equitable metropolitan hub of education.

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