

Schooling in Hong Kong – A Double-edged Sword

If you login to any kinds of students' forum, it is rather likely that you can find thousands of comments complaining about the unrelenting stress of study and overwhelming anxiety caused by the local exams. This gives rise to an apparent question – Are schooling in Hong Kong SAR a doubled-edged sword to students? While some skeptics or the vested interests in this education system may hastily wrap up the discussion and jump to the conclusion that schooling in Hong Kong helps students excel in this exam-oriented society and offers them a promising job prospect. I would regard that as a wrong idea. I believe that Finnish schooling is better because of a basket of competing reasons, which I will elaborate in detail in the following.

To commence, Finnish schooling imposes less pressure on students, which benefits students' well-being. It is undeniable that Hong Kong students' schedule is packed with numerous tests and heavy workload. Most students, if not all, have to burn their midnight oil in order to maintain their competitive edge in their academic studies. Under such great pressure and competitive environment, students are snowed under with continuous tests and most of them are stressed out. Studies in Hong Kong and the world over have shown that there is an increasing number of students who are suffering from illnesses induced by study-related stress. Prevalent examples are nerve dysfunction and extreme myopia, which in some cases can lead to tragic consequences. On the other hand, Finland's education aims at providing a pleasant and encouraging learning environment. Finnish schools have significantly less homework and tests, and students can have plenty of time to wind down and try different leisure recreations like bike sports and yoga, which can enhance both physical and mental health. Not only can students escape from the cutthroat competitions for ranks and merits, but their pressure can also be eased.

Not only does Finnish schooling impose less pressure on students, but it also strengthens student's whole person development. Hong Kong spoon-feeding education requires students to memorize tons of facts and hone their examination skills. Not only do they need to have all the homework done, but they also have to attend at least a certain number of tutorial classes after hours of compulsory school learning to prevent them from lagging behind. To a certain extent, they have become a study machine. While the schedule of Hong

Hong Kong students is already highly packed, they could not possibly squeeze out some time to explore their talents and ability. There is no doubt that Hong Kong schooling has turned students into study robots without critical thinking. However, Finnish schooling focuses more on student participation and discussion, fostering curiosity and encouraging students to challenge ideas. It is not surprising to find the development of financial industry in Hong Kong is booming while the art industry has been hindered. The creative arts are considered as leisure hobbies. Seldom can students get chances to spend time on them. Relatively, Finnish schooling encourages students to further explore their talents and other possible options besides the general route of securing a tradition, high ranking job. Finnish schooling focuses on pupil's personal skills like problem-solving skills and thus enhance students' whole person development.

Added to the advantage of Finnish schooling is that it provides a fairer judgement to student's ability. Hong Kong is notorious for its high-stress educational system. For instance, students are generally under immense pressure of perform well, not to mention the countless tests and exams. Students even have to cope with different sudden quizzes, the extensive drills and practices are counterproductive in nurturing young minds. Students have to fight through a senseless number of tests as to prepare the fertile exam. Thanks to the large number of tests and pressure, many students suffer from examination anxiety which is detrimental to their academic performance. It is undeniable that massive number of tests sarcastically cannot reflect student's true potential and ability. Nevertheless, Finnish schooling has no standardized testing teachers usually keep track of their students' progress by means other than all those summative assessments. For example, group projects are daily work. In fact, scores don't provide us the true picture of a student's ability. By having a larger proportion of daily marks, student's intellectual and potential can be clearly shown and reflected. Finnish schooling adopts more accurate, fairer method to measure student's performance.

Education is no doubt a hot issue nowadays, with many nations, assessing their flouting school systems. It is high time the public and government raised their awareness of this social issue and try to learn from Finnish schooling, which has been named as the best educational system.