

Steer students away from examinations but into practical experience

Nowadays, spoon-feeding education has become the epitome of the Hong Kong education system. While advocates peddle such a knowledge-based and exam-oriented way of teaching offer students' specialized knowledge, it is my firm conviction that this puts student's whole-person



development in jeopardy and deprives them of the chance to grasp practical skills. The reasons and recommendations to rectify it are as follows.

First and foremost, teaching from schools is always exam-oriented, with bare connection with real-life application. In other words, schools place undue emphasis on exam skills and subject knowledge, which can be impractical and unrelated to social needs. For example, strenuous efforts have been put in training associated with public exams, be it the HKDSE or IB. Those exams require skills like answering skills and simple regurgitation of knowledge, without any regards to practical skills like interpersonal skills, responsibility etc. Owing to such pursuit for examination perfection, extra opportunities tailored for practical experience such as job-shadowing and overseas exchange are often neglected, if not heaped scorn on. Consequently, students are destitute of precious hands-on experience which develop their interpersonal skills and responsibility.

Secondly, Hong Kong education is predominantly collective, of which individual needs are ignored. Despite recent metamorphosis into small-class teaching, Hong Kong persists in having a high student to teacher ratio, culminating in deficiency of concentration given to individual students. Therefore, hardly can teachers and schools recognize students' need for practical skills, receiving scant attention to their own practical ability, students can hardly spot their mistakes and hence adopt appropriate ways of rectification. Ultimately, this gives rise to what is so-called 'Hong Kong Kids' where students prevalently lack practical survival skills such as self-care and emotion control. For instance, it has become a common sight that many

millennials are volatile and easily enraged by frivolities such as lack of air conditioning, while some have themselves accompanied by parents in job interviews. As a result, these minor defects in practical ability turn out to be a disaster for students in their proceeding university life and workplace experience.

Notwithstanding, it goes without saying that both schools and the government are perfectly conscious of such a chronic issue. But how to put an end to it?

First things first, schools should offer more extra-curricular activities to students. These other learning experiences include camping, overseas exchange, competition and job-shadowing. Tailored for providing students chances to both explore and apply their skills, these experiences can broaden the horizons of students, forming their own values, attitudes and honing their interpersonal skills and self-directed learning. Eventually, students will be exhilarated by the glamorous world other than academics and examinations, becoming motivated to develop their own skills and become independent. Therefore, students will be interested in developing their own ability as they are given the chances to explore the fascinating part of diverse experiences.

Aside from steering students away from exams and into the real world, eradicating the ingrained stigma carried by practical experience through education can also be an antidote. Indoctrinated by conventional beliefs, parents, students and teachers often exaggerate the importance of examination perfection, with practical experiments stigmatized as 'childish play'. Thus, only by letting them know, the contribution of practical skills to one's well-rounded development can their awareness be raised. Workshops and lectures can be held with surveys and specialists encompassed, to pinpoint the positive ramifications of practical skills to employment and development. Therefore, these stakeholders will understand the importance of practical skills, causing them to allocate more resources for practical experience.

As the saying goes, 'your attitude determines your altitude'. While knowledge remains crucial, concerted effort should be made to empower students to explore and acquire practical skills, which can easily be the stepping stone on the way to success. It is high time we strove to develop the practical skills of our students.