

Values Education in Hong Kong – Problems and Possibilities

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Abstract

Economic, social and political changes have brought a change of values in our young people. A number of research studies have been carried out to look into the values of our young people. Research findings reveal that Hong Kong people are very money-minded and do not exercise autonomy in making moral judgment. They accept democracy, human rights and the rule of law as important but cannot comprehend the essence of them. The implications for the above findings are that something must be done to reconstruct the value system of our young people. We have to develop some positive values in our students as well as the promotion of moral autonomy. However, there are a lot of constraints in the promotion of value education in Hong Kong. For example, the academic-oriented education system has left little room for values education. Teachers are not well prepared to teach values. The ethos of the society is not conducive to the promotion of positive values. But all these problems are not insurmountable if we, as educators have the will and endeavor for what is good for our next generation.

Introduction

The 1990s is a decade of rapid economic, social and political changes in Hong Kong. Economically, she has changed from an industrial city to a financial center of the region and become more dependent on China trade as her main source of income. There has been rapid pace of modernization especially in the aspect of application of the use of information technology. Socially, Hong Kong has become a great metropolitan city. In the past decades of rapid economic growth, materialism, consumerism, hedonism, pragmatism, individualism and success-orientedness are the values influencing the minds of Hong Kong people. Politically, Hong Kong has returned to Chinese sovereignty. In the past two years, China has proved that she kept her words on “one country, two systems”. Hong Kong’s autonomy over her internal affairs has been respected. However, in the past two years, Hong Kong is being badly affected by the economic turmoil, which swept over Southeast Asia and the rest of the world since October, 1997. After enjoying a rapid economic growth for more than two decades, Hong Kong is now on evident recession. Hong Kong people’s confidence in the future has also been receding. These social, political and economic changes have great impact on Hong Kong. At the threshold of the new millennium, it is time to examine the values

of our Hong Kong young people and review the constraints in values education, therefore throwing some lights in the future development of values education in Hong Kong.

Values Orientation of Hong Kong Youths

Social and Ethical Orientation

Though Hong Kong people have been under British rule for a hundred year, they are only flexibly westernized on the surface but essentially Chinese underneath. Interpersonal relationship and ‘group orientedness’ has been the core of the Chinese culture. There is an emphasis on the suppression of the self and adherence to social hierarchy, on the importance of family and filial piety, and on saving ‘face’ as the basis for moral judgment. However, Hong Kong is no faithful replica of Chinese society. It is a society developed within a particular historical and geographical setting, where typical Chinese social features has been blended with local features to produce a culture typical of Hong Kong.

Moral Judgement

According to the survey by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (1997a) to a target group of 600 youths, many respondents felt that Hong Kong young people’s moral standards were ‘low’ (56 per cent) or ‘very low’ (10 per cent) (p.29). To most young people, ‘an immoral action is one which will make them lose face in front of others’ (p.34). About half of the respondents claimed that when dealing with moral issues, the opinion of the majority was usually correct (p.42). 70 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed that “in order to avoid being squeezed out, one cannot help drifting with the current’ (p.26)

Previous to that, the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (1994b) has carried out another survey comparing moral judgment of youths in three cities: Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Beijing. The study has revealed some interesting results. A slight majority (around 50 per cent) of young people in each of the three cities reported that when judging moral issues, their major consideration was conscience, that is, they would see whether their decision would cause harm to others or not (p.42-p.43). However, to the same question, another 20 per cent of the Mainland China respondents would take legal requirement into account (p.47), a percentage that was higher than their Hong Kong counterparts. About 60 per cent of the respondents in each of the three cities disagreed that the traditional Chinese thoughts were usually correct. Beijing respondents were also more likely to question the validity of traditional thoughts on morality (p.43). It is interesting to note that in contrary to common beliefs, the Chinese

youths in the Mainland seem to surpass their Hong Kong counterparts in exercising independence in moral judgment.

Self-concept and self esteem

It seems that Hong Kong young people do not think highly of themselves. In a research report of the Young Women Christian Association in 1990 after interviewing a target group of about 1,000 students in secondary school, one-third of them had very low self-esteem. Among them, 65.8 per cent sometimes felt they were useless. 36.6 per cent were not satisfied with themselves, 34.4 per cent did not feel that they had anything to be proud of 18.4 per cent did not think they had any virtues. 19.7 per cent regarded themselves as total failure (Yong Women Christian Association, 1990, p.13). Six years later, a survey by Dr. Lam Man Ping of the Chinese University of Hong Kong also reveals that secondary school pupils do not like themselves very much. Out of 4,087 secondary school pupils interviewed, more than 30 per cent disliked their own physical appearance and 57.2 per cent claimed “there are many areas that I am dissatisfied about myself”(Lam, 1997, p.37).

Both the YMCA report and Dr. Lam’s report show that the chief cause of the low self-esteem was the young people’s low academic achievements. In Lam’s report the percentage agreeing to the statements that “I am always anxious that I will fail” and “I am always anxious that my academic results are not satisfactory” are overwhelming high (65.8 per cent and 75.5 per cent). These results show that our secondary pupils appear lacking self-confidence, indecisive, suspicious, and dissatisfied about themselves (p.37).

Life satisfaction

The YWCA report shows that, to a certain extent, secondary pupils were satisfied with their lives. 37.1 per cent of the respondents claimed life to be stimulating. 53 per cent said they were sure of their life goal. 47 percent reported that “even if they died that day, their life was still worthwhile”. However, some 61.5 per cent felt they have no control over their lives. 28.3 per cent thought, “life was the same everyday”. 15.5 per cent have no goal at all? And 15.5 per cent did not see any real meaning for life (Young Women Christian Association, 1990, p.12)

The survey of the Hong Kong Family Planning Association in 1991 to 4,000 secondary youths gives slightly difference findings. Only 46 per cent of the respondents were satisfied with life (Hong Kong Family Planning Association, 1991, p.48). About 60 per cent of the youths indicated that they were under pressure. Feeling unhappy and depressed, loss of self-confidence and could not go to sleep were the major psychological symptoms among Hong Kong youths today (ibid, p.46).

The research study by the Commission on Youth survey (1998) showed that “friendship and family” remained highly valued by our young people over the past two decade. “A peace of mind” and “inner harmony” were also moderately valued (Commission on Youth, 1998, p.27). A trend analysis of the changes in life values over the past twenty years revealed two phenomena. First, youths increasingly emphasized competency-orient values (capable, broadminded, and intellectual) rather than the moral values (honesty, kindness, diligence, and responsibility)(ibid, p.27).

Similarly, the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups found that there was a strong wish for self-actualization among Hong Kong young people. The majority of the respondents believed that working hard was the way to succeed. It suggested that young people generally believe that personal effort could overcome obstacle. However, this confidence declined according to age: the older the respondent, the stronger the belief in situation factors. It seems that when young people grow older, they are most likely to be reluctant to change the situation constraint (Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1995a, p.34).

Economic aspiration

It is interesting to note that though more than 65 per cent of Hong Kong respondents were satisfied with their financial situation, yet a large number (30 per cent) claimed that the major source of their stress was financial burden (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1995, p 93). They wanted to earn as much money as possible.

The research report of Commission on Youth shows that high salary has been rated to be the most important criterion for ideal occupations. Benefits in the long run such as the acquisition of knowledge and chance to apply what one learned are valued by a small minority (The Commission on Youth, 1998, p.26). The three most important career goals of our young people are “to deliver good service” (86.5 per cent), “to gain knowledge” (78.5 per cent) and “to have good income” (72.3 per cent (p.22). In the same survey, adults ranked “to have good income” (85 per cent) as their perception of young people’s life goals.

On the other hand, many Hong Kong young people were pessimistic about the economic development in the coming years. More than 40 per cent thought that the economy of Hong Kong would worsen (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1995, p.80) Their greatest worries were “unemployment/underemployment”(26.5 per cent), “crash in the stock market” (15.6 per cent) and “inflation” (7.6 per cent) (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1997b, p.25). However, the young people were still positive in meeting their challenge. To meet the difficulty, 64.6 per cent claimed that they would study in spare time on future their education (p.25).

Political Orientation

Hong Kong's political situation is unique. She has been a British colony for more than one hundred years. In the midst of a universal tide of de-colonization, Hong Kong has been returned to China in 1997 under the Joint Declaration signed between Britain and China. Under the Joint Declaration, Hong Kong is to enjoy her present capitalist status as a Special Administrative Region under China for a period of fifty years. She has been promised self-rule in that China will not interfere with Hong Kong's internal affairs. This change of her political status has also affected the political culture of Hong Kong people. To most of them, political stability and maintenance of the status quo are always on the priority. At the same time, there are signs of political apathy and a sense of powerlessness among the grassroots, while most of Hong Kong Chinese desire for democracy, rule of law and the respect of human rights, many surveys show that, they are familiar with these concepts only in name but not in essence and they do not regard these concepts as universal. Following is a summary of the young people's political aspirations.

Politics and political participation

Youths in Hong Kong were found to be cynical and mistrust towards politics. They rated political power and organizational participation as not important in their lives. Over 40 per cent of the respondents agreed that Hong Kong people should concentrate more on the economy than on political affairs (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1994c, p.52) Hong Kong young people, as compare with their counterparts in Guangzhou and Beijing respondents, have the least concern about political affairs. They were less active in discussing political affairs. Over 55 per cent rarely discussed political question (ibid, p.54). 78 per cent thought that their opinions had no influence on the government's policy-making (ibid, p.46). At the same time, they also expressed a sense of mistrust on political figures. They perceived that politics are too complicated and difficult to comprehend (Commission on Youth, 1998, p.26)

Generally speaking, they trusted the government of Hong Kong and expected the government to take care of many economic and social affairs. However, about one third of respondents in a study expressed that the governor and the government "don't understand" their needs. They viewed that citizens did not have the power to influence government policies and agreed that 'the government does not care for the citizens; it is influenced only by the leader of groups or the capitalist class' (Commission on Youth, 1998, p.26)

Democracy

Hong Kong people want democracy but the understanding of democracy among the Hong Kong Chinese is still limited. When asked what constituted a democratic government, 43.9 percent of the respondents classify government as democratic if it was willing to consult public opinion (Chan & Chan, 1989, p.94)

Chan and Chan made the following remarks about the democratic attitude of Hong Kong College students:

They (The Hong Kong students) relate politics to democratic processes because they believe that this process would benefit them. Their avocation rests on what these methods will bring them rather than a commitment to the basic principle of democracy (Chan & Chan, 1989, p.10)

Chan and Chan's research reveal that college students are not enthusiastic about consultative government. A large proportion of them (41.7 per cent) did not consider that advisory committees- an essential compliment of consultative government to be important. Also there was a division of views as to whether "election is the best way to actualize public will" and also "democracy means direct election".

Recent surveys also showed that young people claimed to support democracy but they took no action for political participation. One-third of respondents agreed that voting is effective to reflect views to the government (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1994b, p.46). They regarded the major force of social reform were economic development, a competent government and democratic reform (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1994a, p.48). 50 per cent to 60 per cent expressed an intention to vote in different election exercises. Yet one study found that only 25 per cent of the respondents did show up in previous election (Commission of Youth, 1998, p.26)

Human rights

What is the young people's attitude towards human rights? A survey carried out by the Junior Chamber of Commerce (1992) reveals that our young people (more than 47 per cent) were satisfied with the human rights situation in Hong Kong (more than 47 per cent) and only 3 per cent showed their dissatisfaction. The survey by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups showed that two-fifths of the respondents believed that under no circumstances should freedom of association be restricted, and half thought that the government had no right to prohibit the publication of articles which could induce social disorder. Yet when confronted with a conflict between social order and human rights, they often found it difficult to make a choice. Some of them even suggested that the police should exercise their power to check on impoverished-looking

people. On the other hand, some objected to “police violence in forcing suspects to confess” (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1993).

Likewise, the 1996 survey by the Oxfam and Amnesty International showed that there were misinterpretation of students about the concept of human rights. A substantial number of students (more than 30 per cent) agreed that the police could use ‘appropriate’ force in eliciting confession from the suspects and re-introduce the death penalty (p.13). There was also discrimination against the minorities, the disabled people and the homosexuals (Oxfam and Amnesty International, 1996)

The above surveys show that our youths do not accept human rights as universal. They show confusion and discrepancies in their responses to different social and political issues concerning with human issues.

Legal conception

In a survey over the legal conception of young people in Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Hong Kong, most of the Hong Kong respondents regarded the major function of the law is to maintain social order and facilitated the rule of government. The Mainland respondents, in addition, regarded law as upholding justice (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth People, 1994b, p.4)

As to whether they would obey law which they regarded as wrong, 54 per cent of Hong Kong respondents reported they would. The foremost reason they gave was that they would do so from a sense of civic responsibility. Quite a number of the respondents said they would obey the law because they felt they could not change it. Some would do so out of fear of prosecution (ibid, p.47-48).

On the question of whether the court should not follow instructions from the government – over 38 to 31 percent of the Beijing and Hong Kong respondents said that the court should follow government’s instructions. The response was surprising because in Hong Kong, unlike the Mainland, the judiciary was immune from the intervention of the executive branch.

Moreover, some 48 percent of the Hong Kong respondents agreed that an offender could be cleared of legal liabilities if he or she was wealthy. This represented a higher percentage than those reported in the Mainland. Although the Mainland respondents did not think that a just verdict was not always possible, wealth, in their view, was not the factor influencing the court (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1994b, p.51). The responses from the Hong Kong youths revealed their ignorance about the rule of law.

Though almost all respondents agreed that citizens should obey the law. But there was also a high proportion, especially of males (about 30 per cent) who strongly agreed and agreed that “as long as it is not immoral, one can use any means, legal or illegal to

make money” (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1997a, p.25). There was a worrying trend that youths are increasingly building up an attitude accepting illegal or indecent means to obtain money when need arise.

Under the same logic, a study by ICAC found that young people displayed a more tolerant attitude toward corruption than before. More young people accepted the offer of a bribe to solve problems (The Commission on Youth, 1998, p.27)

Implications for values education

Analysis of the above findings shows that the young people of Hong Kong have conflicting values. Most of the youngsters feel that their moral standards are declining. Conformity to peer groups and following the views of the majority is usually their basis to make moral judgment. Not to harm others is another factor they will consider when making moral decision. Conceptually our young people advocate democracy, human rights and the rule of law, yet they have not grasped the essence of these seemingly ‘western’ values. In this respect, it is of crucial importance to help our students to develop a sense of moral autonomy and be master of their own destiny. They should have “the sense of self-satisfaction, individual’s social functioning and interpersonal relationship” (Yip, 1999, p.55). This should be taken as the aims of values education.

Values Education in Hong Kong today

Values education is not playing an important part in the school curriculum, yet it is still an integral component of school life. The Chinese have always stressed the importance of good values. Most schools claim values education as one of their school aims. Parents send their children to schools where discipline is strict. School authorities take pride in the fact that their students behave properly. Recently because of the rising rate of juvenile delinquency and youth problems, there has been a call for further promotion of values education in schools. It is interesting to note that social problems resulted from a changing society have renewed the interest in values education.

In Hong Kong, there is a strong link between religious and values education. Values are inculcated through Religious classes. In non-religious schools, school assemblies held every morning for about fifteen minutes to half an hour are the main opportunities to instill moral values, especially the Confucian values like ‘*jen* (humanity), *li* (propriety), *i*, *chih* (wisdom) and *Hsiao* (filial piety). Also, some informal periods like the Form Master/Mistress periods are devoted to instilling traditional values to students. In some schools there are timetabled periods for values education and there is always a school-based program but the content is mostly didactic

in nature, for example, to exhort students to have good manner and practice punctuality etc. Occasionally values education programs prepared by the Education Department and Independent Commission against Corruption are used. In many schools, school activities such as “A Week on Courtesy” or “Selection of the best –disciplined class” or “Model students” are carried out as a form of values education.

In 1982, four overseas experts were selected by the Secretariat of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to form a panel to carry out an overall review of Hong Kong education, with Sir John Llewellyn as the chairman. Llewellyn and his associates, after observing school practices in Hong Kong, had made the following conclusions:

Many schools, especially the religious ones, explicitly encourage the upholding of the Confucian ethic alongside western views of the world. Thus, school embodies the traditional values extreme orderliness, self-discipline and dedication (Llewellyn, et.al . 1982, p.54)

Such an emphasis on ‘good boy and good girl orientation’ and ‘group orientedness’ is at stage 3 and 4 of Kohlberg’s hierarchy of moral development. The conventional level of moral development and a bag of Christian and Confucian virtues form the core of value education in most Hong Kong schools.

In order to help to promote values education, the Hong Kong Education Department has in the past years published three guidelines for schools’ reference: in 1981, the General Guidelines on Moral Education , in 1985 and 1996 two separate Guidelines on Civic Education in schools. The emphasis is gradually shifting from moral education to civic education, though now civic education carries a strong ‘undertone of moral education’. (Yeung, 1990, p.43) The reason may be that political changes had prompted the public interest to civic education. All these years under the colonial rule, the government ‘s attention is on raising students’ consciousness of “serving the society” and on communication between the government and citizens. Then with the signing of the Joint Declaration in 1984, Hong Kong was to return China as a Special Administrative Region in 1997. The Hong Kong government realized the urgent need to provide civic education to the people of Hong Kong so that they could perform their role more effectively and comprehensively in political and constitutional matters. As the political and social system of Hong Kong is quite different from China, the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty have the following implications for civic education: harmonizing capitalism, socialism and patriotism; developing a new identity; education for political literacy and education for citizenship. To answer the

need for the imminent change of political status of Hong Kong, a new set of guidelines “Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools” was issued by the Education Department in 1996. The new guidelines aim to

develop in them (students) positive attitudes and values conducive to the development of a sense of belonging to Hong Kong and China so that they are ready to contribute to the betterment of the society, the state and the world (Education Department, 1996, p.5).

Hence it is evident after the changeover of sovereignty, the focus of moral and civic education has been shifted to patriotic education and the development in our students a sense of belonging to the motherland.

Constraints in the Promotion of Values Education

In Hong Kong, education has been seen as an indispensable instrument facilitating modernization especially in terms of supplying workforce to the growing industry and promoting economic growth, the instrumental aspect of education is over-emphasized and the values aspect overlooked. Following is a list of the constraints in our education system.

Difficulty in Defining a Moral Code

In a pluralistic society, it is not easy and often dangerous to impose on its citizens a unified moral code. The 1980 Guidelines on Moral Education were careful to avoid any rigid definition of moral standards:

However, in dealing with what is not acceptable, it must be emphasized that there is no one universally accepted behavioral code, including those qualities mentioned, which can be applied to all circumstances, at all times indiscriminately. One serious pitfall is to think that one can teach a set of general moral principles without any reference to particular situations since moral judgments may vary from one situation to another, both because circumstances alter cases and because teaching at a high level of abstraction is educationally unsound and ineffective for most children (Education Department, 1980, p.6).

Also, the Guidelines pointed out:

Values are generally ‘vague’, and it can be argued that values cannot be taught, except by example. Very often value judgements tend to change with time and what is regarded a perfectly acceptable code of behavior today could have been denounced as immoral two or three generations ago. Technological change in turn bring about social and moral changes or at least raises moral questions for which tradition can provide no ready answers. Even if we have what may be called ‘right’ answers to current problems and can persuade our pupil to accept them; this will not help them when new problem come along. Therefore, if we try to give a dogmatic type of moral training to our pupils, they may find it difficult to respond to moral problems for which they have not been prepared (ibid, p.2).

According to the Guidelines on Moral Education, the objective of values education is not to give the ‘right’ answer but to ‘aim at cultivating in the pupils moral attitudes and social values throughout the development of reflective or critical thinking’ (ibid, p.2)

Similar attitude is adopted in the 1985 Guidelines for Civic Education. Though the Guidelines advocate democracy, yet no definite concept of democracy is given. The reason as given by the Guidelines is as follows:

Democracy means different things too different people. As the American president Abraham Lincoln put it, it means “Government of the people, by the people, for the people”. Alternatively, it may also be interpreted as a way of life in which the decision-making process is characterized by majority contra. There are many brands of democracy in the political arena – some pluralistic, some centralist and various combinations of both. So education for democracy would be difficult to interpret. Although some basic understanding of the concept of democracy may be introduced according to the intellectual level and experience of pupils, for the purpose of these guidelines, the term “civic education” will be used (Education Department, 1985, p.9).

The Guidelines on moral and civic education have tried to keep a neutral stance in the teaching of values. But in so doing, the three Guidelines have become too encompassing, vague and lack of focus.

Aims of education

In Hong Kong, education is entrusted with the task of promoting economic growth. Educating people is a 'business investment'. It helps to increase labor's productive by increasing the skills and knowledge of individuals. In Hong Kong, education is considered as the best tool for social mobility. Our young people see the making of money as the goal of life. In this society, credentials count most and an all round development of school children is often overlooked. This explains why values education does not constitute an important part of the school curriculum.

Examination pressure

Education in Hong Kong is essentially pragmatic in nature. Passing examinations turn provide the most realistic chance of achieving social mobility and financial well being for the individual. In addition to passing public examination, the vast majority of schools hold internal full-scale examinations, three times or at least twice and sometimes four times a year. Moreover, formal and informal tests are held at frequent intervals. Hong Kong students are subjected to great examination pressure. Success in examination is usually achieved through memorizing of facts, which is considered to be the most efficient way of study. The promotion of a spirit of inquiry and learning has been subordinated or ignored. Independent judgement, creativity and originality are not important. Previous surveys all confirm that Hong Kong young people have very low self-esteem. The root of the cause is the competitive nature of the education system. When children's self esteem is badly shaken, how can they be expected to learn to respect and love themselves as well as others? Students have learned from a very young age to win at all costs. There is no sympathy for the losers at the merciless arena of examination.

Curriculum and the Teaching Methods,

The curriculum is characterized by an emphasis on factual knowledge. This has long been criticized as being detrimental to the overall educational process because it "encourages memorizing and rote learning and does not induce creative and critical thinking." (Chan, 1972, p.270).

Teachers too, have great constraints in their teaching. With crowded classrooms, very full syllabuses of work and the pressure of examination, most local teachers in Hong Kong can give no more than lip service to values education. They cannot adopt a more vivid means of teaching activities in order to meet better the social and emotional needs of their pupils. Not only are there few opportunities for activities which encourage self-discovery or experimentation, there is even little attention paid to children who have difficulty in their studies. The typical Hong Kong pupil is a passive

listener. Lessons are usually deductive in nature. Students are not trained to inquire, analyze or draw conclusion for themselves. Their main task is to listen to the teachers, copy notes, memorize and reproduce them during examination.

Too many of our local primary schools are still teacher-dominated and teacher-centered in the old tradition and in line with an outmoded local conception of the nature and purpose of the primary schools, the result is that the pupils remain a passive nonentity -“to be seen and not to be heard”. Teacher talks too much, the pupils too little. By tradition the teacher is a ‘god’ (Henderson, 1973).

Even till now, teachers see their role as preparing students for examinations. They fail to attend to students’ curiosity and creativity or to stimulate their concern in the society. This is antithetical to values education. To reach a mature stage of moral development, students have to develop a respect for human being and show interest in the social affairs. To bury themselves in books doesn’t help them much.

When teachers are ‘gods’ in the classroom, school heads regard themselves as ‘little emperors’ who decide everything in the running of school. Under this circumstance, it is difficult to promote a sense of democracy in Hong Kong schools because the principals are not democratic themselves.

Discipline

According to the Llewellyn Report, discipline is strictly maintained in local schools,

Student’s discipline is effected through a variety of classic procedures – splitting pupils into competitive houses, prefect system, and so on. Punishment is rarely physical but usually takes the form of detention, extra work or verbal admonition. Many schools, especially the religious ones, explicitly encourage the upholding of the Confucian ethic alongside western views of the world. Thus, schooling embodies the traditional values of extreme orderliness, self-discipline and dedication. However, there is some evidence of truancy, vandalism and disrespect on the fringe (Llewellyn, 1982, p.54)

In school, the hidden curriculum is revealed by the school regulation. In Hong Kong, many schools lay down meticulous regulations. This includes how school children should dress for schools, the length of their hair, even how they should behave

outside school. Generally the type of punishment are more varied and comprehensive than the rewards. It is easier to break school regulations and be subject to disciplinary measures than to earn credits. Most of our school atmosphere is punitive. The hidden curriculum of most Hong Kong schools is not conducive to the development of moral growth and democracy. Students are subjected to strict discipline and there is little room for them to explore and experiment because proper behavior is strictly laid down in school regulations. Also, the authoritarian atmosphere of most schools gives little opportunities for students to voice their opinion or to participate in school affairs. There is not conducive to prepare them as future masters of society.

Possibilities and prospect for future development

To promote values education, it is the responsibility of school administrators and teachers to foster an environment that actively stimulates moral development. The role of teacher is not to 'teach' by inculcating ideas, but to develop reasoning power of children and prompt them to think. In a way, moral development is seen as the agent's active change in patterns of response to problematic social situation rather than the learning of culturally accepted rules. At the same time, we have to foster the child's power to empathize, that is, to help him develop the ability to accept roles. In this respect, the school ethos and organizations are very important if we expect children to develop the values of respecting life, courtesy, integrity, justice, democracy...

Kohlberg has made the following remarks:

I am arguing that the only constitutionally legitimate form of moral education in the school is the teaching of justice and that the teaching of justice in schools require just schools (Kohlberg, 1970, p.67)

In the book The Fifteen Thousand Hours, M. Rutter (1979) and his associates had carried out a research on the effect of school on student behavior. The research findings indicated that the school process has a consistent influence upon the outcome of the students in respect of conduct and academic achievement. The structure of the school, which includes the differentiation of pupils into teaching groups (whether there is streaming of classes or mixed abilities), the teaching system (whether in the form of team tacking or one-teacher in one classroom), the rules and regulations and their implantation, the prefect system, rituals and crememonies (school assembly graduation day, etc.) all contribute to the school ethos. In short, an atmosphere of trust and acceptance, mutual respect and co-operation, not only between teachers and children but between the senior and junior staff as well, is highly beneficial to values education..

The changing society has brought with it fresh problems. Just as it is hard for a man to establish his identity in a traditional Chinese society, a modern man find it equally difficult to withstand the tide of commercialism and materialism.

In a machine-dominated civilization obedience to the machine is largely a necessity during working hours... There is here neither incentive nor permission to recognize one' full capabilities or to take any initiative... Their leisure hours see many men and women summoned by advertisement to eat this or that, to do this or that because everybody else... It is, of course, in the advertiser's interest to direct his appeal to the majority and to induce more and more people to want the same thing. Under such a bombardment of suggestions and directives, it is easy to find oneself simply acting upon the suggestion which are made most pleasantly, without exercising choice, From this kind of somnambulist reaction it is not far to the point at which we don't act till told to do so – a condition highly discouraging both to genuine feeling and moral growth (Niblett, 1963, p.60)

To frame for the future, it is essential that we, as educators should help the overall development of our students. School should not just teach facts but the promotion of moral values. Young people need to develop a positive self-concept and understand their own potentials. At the same time, they need to develop a productive relationship with other people (parents, friends, marital partners, colleagues, employers, etc.). They need knowledge and information about themselves, their neighborhood, their community and their country, especially in the aspect of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. They need to have opportunities to develop the skills in decision making and political participation. The more information they have and the more skills they acquire, the more autonomous they are. Based on adequate information and appropriate skills, they can effectively make judgments, choose their career and participate in social or political affairs.

Recently, there are some promising signs that our Government is taken a more serious stand towards values education. In a review of our education system, it is clearly declared that

To enable everyone to develop to their full and individual potential in all areas covering ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics, so that each individual is ready for continuous self-learning, thinking, exploring, innovating and adapting to changes throughout life; filled with self-confidence and team spirit; and is willing to strive incessantly for the prosperity, progress, freedom

and democracy of the society, and to contribute to the future well-being of the nation and the world at large (Education Commission, p.15).

If the above stand is to be turned into education policies. There will be greater opportunity for values education to be promoted in our schools. Indeed the Education Department has reorganized its subject committees to allow more room for values education. For the time being an integrated curriculum for Personal and Social Education is under draft and will be ready for school's use soon. This may provide a more formalized channel for the teaching of values because there may be a form period in the school time-table assigned for the Teaching of Personal and Social Education. When Hong Kong is entering a new phase in her political development and when the world is enter a new millennium, it is time to review how our young generation think and whether education meets their needs in facing 'a brave new world'.

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