

Chapter Two

What is School Guidance

The New Millennium

At the beginning of the new millennium, people are facing lots of changes: changes in the world, in our country, in Hong Kong, at home, and in the individual.

The advancement of technology in the last couple of decades, especially in information technology, has brought about drastic changes in people's life. On one hand, communication among people becomes easier and more convenient by electronic means; on the other hand, the upgrading of information technology has brought about challenge to the conventional mode of interpersonal relationship.

The ups-and-downs in world-wide economy, the fast development and discoveries in different fields and contemporary reforms have led to many uncertainties. All these escalated the anxiety level of people. News on violence is not uncommon. Incidents of bullying at schools have aroused much attention locally and on the international scene.

The Hong Kong Situation

Hong Kong, in the twentieth century, is a major financial centre in Asia with rapid technological advancement. At the same time, she has also experienced enormous changes in the life style. Since the late '70s, lots of companies have relocated their offices and production lines to the Mainland. This has led to frequent travelling and absence of parents from home. The issue of extra-marital affairs causes numerous family tragedies.

Since the majority of the Hong Kong population are Chinese, the traditional Chinese value system is quite deep-rooted. Being a metropolitan city, Hong Kong has also been under the influence of the western culture. Therefore, diversity of culture exists. However, when it comes to parenting style, the Chinese tradition dominates.

The traditional Chinese way of parenting is authoritative and reserved. The more the parents love their children, the stricter and more demanding they become. Sharing of feelings among family members is not a common practice. Expressing their love to one another verbally is rare. Besides, parents have high expectation of children's academic achievement. Time together is very often spent on supervision of school assignments and preparation for tests and examinations. Family days may be a luxury in many homes.

There are families in which the parents are so busy with their work that their children are left to the care of domestic helpers. In order to compensate for the lack of time together with their children, some parents provide their children with material supply such as excessive pocket-money, luxurious toys

.....Management's Support and Devotion

and branded clothings. They also allow their children much freedom in playing computer games and going out with their friends. They may also arrange their children to attend various extra-curricular activities or courses to keep them fully occupied while allowing them little choice or space for personal interest. On the other hand, there are also families with working parents who cannot afford even the minimal support to their children and leave them completely to the care of the school.

It is certain that most parents are caring for their children and would like to provide guidance to them. Nevertheless, owing to the pressure of work or lack of appropriate parenting skills, parents may encounter difficulties in establishing a good parent-child relationship and providing effective guidance to the development of their children.

Nature of Adolescence

Adolescence is a time for the quest and establishment of self-identity. However, adolescents may have difficulties in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and establishing a positive self-image. They may also be disturbed by the physical and psychological changes which they experienced. They begin to take an interest in the opposite sex, and in the absence of appropriate guidance some may become rather confused. However, they may not know how to handle the relationship, and may hesitate to disclose their worries to the adults around them. They may not have clear goals regarding schooling and career. They may query about the merit of their existence and the meaning of life. In order to overcome their identity crisis and gain acceptance, especially from their peers, they submit to the adolescent sub-culture and adopt its designated

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language and dress code.

Besides, adolescents yearn for independence and freedom. They may not accept the standard or value system imposed by their parents and teachers. On the other hand, they look for support and advice from adults when they feel that they are in need of help. They also care about recognition from adults. Nevertheless, they may not know the right way, or they simply do not want to follow the norm in order to gain the recognition they yearn for. They may challenge authority verbally or behaviourally. This could have resulted in a kind of tug-of-war within themselves or power struggle between them and their parents and teachers.

Furthermore, adolescence is a time when the young people begin to make judgment based not just on simple facts or concrete information but on logical deductions. Besides, it is also a time when the young people begin to internalize the general rights and standards imposed by the society and develop their self-conscience.

Nevertheless, in going through these developmental processes, without appropriate guidance and directives from adults, adolescents may become frustrated, helpless and lonely. They find life meaningless, get lost, become cynical, go astray and display anti-social behaviour.

The Importance of Guidance Work in Schools

As adolescents are a part of the familial, social and world systems, changes in these systems have both direct and indirect impacts on them.

.....*Collaboratively Developed Guidance Policy*

Therefore, there is a worldwide trend of educational reform from mere dissemination of knowledge to fostering students' overall development. It is in such aspect that school guidance work is considered to be of paramount importance to help our adolescents maximize their own potential, acquire acceptable social skills, discriminate right from wrong, develop appropriate values, adjust to social-economic changes and in general, be better equipped for real life. In addition, school guidance work can help prevent or overcome students' problems through prompt assistance and appropriate advice. It is also a supplement to the guidance they get at home.

Objectives of School Guidance Work

School guidance work is intended to fulfill the supportive function in enhancing the whole-person development of our students, and all school personnel have their part to play. It is of developmental and preventive nature applicable to all students, who do not necessarily have any immediate problems or difficulties.

School guidance work should be carried out with the following objectives:

- (i) to create a pleasurable and inviting learning environment in school;
- (ii) to help students develop a better understanding of themselves; their abilities, strengths and weaknesses;
- (iii) to raise students' awareness of their feelings and develop their skills in handling emotions;

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- (iv) to help students build up self-confidence and enhance self-esteem;
- (v) to promote desirable learning and social behaviour;
- (vi) to facilitate students in life planning, goal setting, and career formulating;
- (vii) to identify problematic areas at an early stage; and
- (viii) to provide initial and front-line intervention in helping students cope with their problems.

Elements of Effective School Guidance

From the findings of studies on school effectiveness in a number of countries, and discussions with school personnel during school guidance visits by the Department's inspectors and educational psychologists/counsellors, a number of elements which have positive impact on school guidance have been identified.

These elements of success include:

- (i) strong leadership of the Principal;
- (ii) support from and devotion of the senior management;
- (iii) involvement of senior management, including the guidance team leader, in the development of guidance policy;
- (iv) shared vision and objectives on guidance work among school personnel;
- (v) systematic delivery of developmental guidance work;

.....*Shared Vision and Objectives*

- (vi) mobilization of teachers of different functional departments to join force in running the guidance programmes/activities;
- (vii) close liaison with parents;
- (viii) positive climate both around the school and within the classroom; and
- (ix) evaluation on guidance policy, programmes/activities to ensure that they match the needs of the students.

Suggested Framework for Implementation of School Guidance

Based on these elements, the following framework on implementation of school guidance work is presented here for reference.

- Set clear guidance vision with the ultimate goal of whole-person development of students.
- Share the vision with all school personnel through formal and informal communication and discussion.
- Survey the teachers' concern regarding the whole-person development of the students.
- Survey the needs of students.
- Prioritize concern of teachers, match concern with needs of students and plan target/theme of the year, and/or the next 3-5

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years.

- Incorporate target into both formal and informal curriculum.
- Encourage involvement of various school personnel, students and parents in planning and/or implementation of guidance programmes/activities.
- Stress on process and development of an inviting environment for students' social and emotional growth.
- Make use of community resources.
- Review effectiveness and allow flexibility in adjustment and modification.