

HK schools should use renewed senior secondary curriculum to address students' preferences

The new school year has begun. With the introduction of the renewed senior secondary curriculum by the Education Bureau, schools are expected to have lesson time released after optimising the four core senior secondary subjects. Students are encouraged to use this time to participate in other learning experiences and life-wide learning activities or engage in other personal pursuits according to their different interests, abilities and aspirations.

Youth Ideas, a research centre under the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, recently conducted a survey titled "Preparing for the Changes in the Senior Secondary Curriculum". According to the survey, many students preferred spending the extra school hours on enriching their personal experiences and interests (45.4 per cent), experiential learning (34.4 per cent) or taking part in academic-related life-wide learning activities (32.8 per cent). These findings, however, are not in line with most schools' plan to allocate the released class time to boosting students' academic performance by engaging them in more detailed subject study. What is clear is the disconnect between the emphasis that schools, parents and future employers place on academic achievement and what students themselves would prefer. In view of this expectation discrepancy, what can be done?

The survey put forward two proposals. First, greater promotion of the importance of other learning experiences is imperative. Everyone needs to acknowledge the importance of letting students have exposure to different areas at an early stage to identify their strengths and weaknesses so that they might be able to develop clearer career goals and be able to reach their full potential. A discussion with critical stakeholders, such as secondary schools and universities, is necessary so that everyone has the same shared understanding when offering diversified options to students under the curriculum. Only then will other learning experiences as well as life-wide or applied learning be recognised and given due merit in university admissions.

Second, with the abundant resources available, schools should be provided with guidelines. This would better direct them as to how to use grants to best facilitate students' whole-person development while also expanding the capacity of other

learning experiences, life planning and career education, all the while making the entire arrangement flexible. In particular, job-shadowing opportunities could also be made available, especially to secondary school students. This would go a long way towards enabling them to acquire essential skills and gain hands-on work experience.

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