Press Release

The Rise of Affective Learning:
Hong Kong Education is Opening a New Chapter
Teachers’ professionalism in connecting cognitive and affective learning, enhancing parent-child relationships, and concerted community actions are the keys

The Education Policy Unit (EPU) and the Academic Unit of Social Contexts and Policy of Education (SCAPE) at the Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong (HKU) organised the “Hong Kong Affective Learning Conference and Workshops – Key for Nurturing Future-Ready Learners in the New Normal”, which was held virtually on January 22, 2022. The event received an overwhelming response and was attended by more than 380 educators. The conference was moderated by Professor Cheng Kai Ming, Emeritus Professor and Honorary Director of EPU, and Professor Catherine KK Chan and Dr Cheung Wai Ming from SCAPE at the Faculty of Education, HKU. In view of intermittent disruption of schooling in the New Normal, more than 20 experts and practitioners joined hands in discussing the transformational practices in affective learning at teacher, school and community levels under the New Normal.

The conference started with the keynote on “How Emotions are Made”, presented by Professor Lisa Feldman Barrett, Northeastern University and moderated by Professor Cheng. Professor Cheng pointed out that the main take-away from the keynote was that students could learn to be responsible of their emotions by learning early and systematically in education. He further indicated that attendees could improve affective education by leveraging local and school contexts and integrating it into academic learning. He believed that affective education should be promoted, while new theories should be developed and integrated into the Hong Kong contexts.

There were three themed panel discussions on innovative practices in affective education at student, school and community levels. The first theme was Catering for Diversity in Affective Learning, focusing on how current affective education can cater to students’ multicultural backgrounds, learning abilities, interests, motivation and aspiration, and their transformation under the New Normal.

Principal Ho Ying Hon of the Caritas Fanling Chan Chun Ha Secondary School observed from school data sets that affective outcomes and student achievements were closely related in his school. These are supported by the long-standing practice of merging the values of school motto with spiritual education that have fostered effective student learning. Professor Lam Shui Fong from HKU shared how mindfulness has long-term positive impacts on students and teachers in diverse school contexts. Professor Lam is the Director of the Jockey Club “Peace and Awareness” Mindfulness Culture in Schools Initiative.

Ms Lai Yuen Shan, Principal of Pat Heung Central Primary School and her team shared their online plan to celebrate Chinese New Year with ethnic students and their parents as well as to promote family activities. Mr Chui Ka Cheung, Principal of Aldrich Bay Government Primary School, underscored that schools could leverage experts in the community, sister schools and society to conduct the whole spectrum of life-wide learning activities online even when schooling was suspended.

Dr Wong Kam Yiu, Jimmy, Executive Director, and Ms Livia Tang, Head of the School & Student Services Division, The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education, highlighted that students’ development in the cognitive domain and the affective domain were not at the same pace, so it required both immersive and independent approaches to implement affective education.
The second theme was *Teacher and Principal Collaboration and Leadership, Home-School Co-operation*. Principal So Ping Fai of the Tin Shui Wai Methodist Primary School said the school had already started promoting the idea of “School Suspension with Continuous Learning, School Suspension with Continual Love” back in 2020. She has led the whole school to reflect on and to refine the levels of knowledge objectives in the blended learning of different topics while intensifying caring practices for students and parents.

Ms Law Siu Tung, Curriculum Leader of Shanghai Alumni Primary School, listed the levels of affective learning objectives that are integrated into values education across the whole-school curriculum and learning inside and outside classroom. During the discussion, the presenters and attendees agreed that opportunities should be provided to students for receiving and expressing their emotions.

Mr Kam Wai Ming, Principal, and teacher Ms To Yue Man, of Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Bishop Hall Secondary School, explained how STEM education and positive education could work together by sharing common learning objectives in values. Ms Yan Kin Foon of Shau Kei Wan Government Secondary School greatly appreciated the selfless dedication of teachers, and recognised their effort in learning, reflecting, transforming and acting quickly according to the needs of their students. Mr Li Kin Man, Principal of Salesians of Don Bosco Ng Siu Mui Secondary School led the boys who were being labelled “couch potatoes” to experience the transformation from cure to care.

The third theme was *Community Organisations and Participation*. Different organisations, institutions, and professionals shared their beliefs, knowledge and non-public resources on affective education, which exemplified the close collaboration of universities, charity organisations, business sector, professionals (e.g., social workers, psychologists, school development officers), parents and government departments with schools.

Mr Cheung Leong, Executive Director of Charities and Community, The Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC), demonstrated how the HKJC supported various projects to respond to changes and used social-emotional learning to support adolescents. Mr Eugene Fong, Chairman of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, stressed that parent-student relationship at home was critical for students’ well-being, and parents also had needs for peer support. This was echoed by Mr Raymond Yang, Mr Matthew Kwok and Mr Anthony Ngai, Co-founders of JUST FEEL. Their organisation has been providing services that promote multi-directional compassionate communication strategies among students, teachers and parents.

Dr Kwok Lai Yuk Ching, Sylvia, who leads the Positive Education Laboratory, City University of Hong Kong, pointed out that the elements of affective education converged with Chinese cultural values. Also, transformational pedagogies and whole-school approach could promote positive emotions, engagement, accomplishment and human relationships. Dr Elaine Chan, School-based Educational Psychologist Supervisor of Po Leung Kuk, shared how school sponsoring bodies could meet school-based needs in affective learning by systematically promoting positive education in K-12 education.

Mr Antony Li, Programme Director of the Bei Shan Tang Foundation, also stated that they were deepening multi-level strategies to enhance teachers’ professional competence, including collaboration with Po Leung Kuk and other school sponsoring bodies. The Character Education Foundation said character building was to be implemented based on role-modelling and according to students’ stages of development. Mrs Amy Chan, Chairman of the Child Development Initiative Alliance, has partnered with the business sector and government departments to provide valuable internship opportunities to engage and inspire those who were deprived of resources and support.

The recordings and files of the conference are available on [https://scape.edu.hku.hk/hkal2022/](https://scape.edu.hku.hk/hkal2022/).
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