

Buddha-like youngsters in Hong Kong: DEC-oriented learning and teaching in a GE course

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Abstract

The Census and Statistic Department (2018) has reported that more and more Hong Kongers postpone marriage or choose to stay single. The report also indicates that the increasing late marriage rate is related to higher educational level. It is expected that in the near future, the number of Hong Kongers who have never been married will increase dramatically as more and more millennials, who identify or are identified by others as “Buddhist Youth” or “Buddha-like youngsters”, have low to zero interest in careers, romantic relationships, and marriage. It is necessary to explore the needs of Buddha-like youngsters and evaluate if higher education could help students establish intimate relationships.

Various social and economic factors might play a role in this trend, echoing the need for enhancing life education. In 1998, the Hong Kong government announced new guidelines on learning and stage-based learning objectives for interpersonal relationships. From 2003 onward, the government implemented the twelve-session “life education” classes in primary and secondary school to enhance students’ self-knowledge, self-care, and interpersonal skills. Although the government has advocated for some improvements in public life education, it is still not an important subject in the school curriculum. Researchers have argued that most adolescents in Hong Kong have not received sufficient guidance from parents or schools (Fok, 2005), and some parents and students in Hong Kong even have a negative attitude towards the subject.

Although building intimacy is a critical task between the ages of twenty and forty, studies have not been able to address why Hong Kong millennials (particularly in college) are not interested in developing intimate relationships. It remains unclear what obstacles college students face in starting relationships, given that they have more opportunities to interact with the opposite sex during college. This project will provide an opportunity for students to explore this phenomenon, identify challenges and difficulties, and develop strategies and solutions. The findings may enable the revamping of the formal curriculum in life education at CityU (GE 2109: Love, Sex, and Relationships) as well as promote positive education across disciplines to enhance self-understanding, self-management, and interpersonal communication.