

The battle for us–out after-school life

Business



It is the end of a normal school day.

Backpack full of homework, heavy textbook on my hand, and handy bag with snacks in it that follow us to our next stage of a day: after-school. After-school, in my parents' age, is the leisure time when they hang out with their friends, read books on their own, or have more sleep. After-school, in our generation, becomes another battlefield. A battlefield that not only forces us to study more, but also tortures us with extracurricular activities that may make our resumes look better than others. Common sense seems to dictate that this circumstance is good for children and teenagers because they learn a lot from it, and since everyone is doing it, no one should quit this habit of sending kids to cram schools, volunteer works, or internships that the kids do not willing to go.

Although I agree with the adults, or general public, up to the fact that the kids actually learn something in those experiences, I cannot accept the overall conclusion that it is necessary for every kids to join this “ crucial competition,” or else they fall behind on these first-steps, and eventually lose the opportunity to success. Success cannot be defined in our teenage, and our childhood should be the time for exploration. Today, it is common to see a group of 9-year-old girls learning ballet with their parents sitting around and whispering which girl improves the most, or which girl does not practice enough. Just across the street of the ballet classroom, there is a cram school with high school students inside solving problems on the new concepts they just learned. Today, it is common to see the stress of the children and teenagers after-school. From elementary school to high school, kids' after-school time is still linked to school.

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They go to cram schools for better grades at school. They work on their extra curriculums for better resumes at school. They follow the parents' or adults' instructions for better peer relationships at school because everybody is doing so. Our after-school becomes a combat. We are competing each other.

To strengthen ourselves, we need to either have a talented brain and high IQ or join more activities and go to more cram schools. If we do not get into an AP class at school, it is okay because we can always go to cram schools, and still take the AP exam in May. If we do not earn a position in the orchestra, it is okay because we can always go to a music classroom, practice on my own, and go to national competition by myself. It is wrong. It is totally wrong. The purpose of education should not be based on competition or what looks better on my resume nor does the purpose of after-school.

The purpose of education and after-school time should be teaching us to have the ability to learn, the passion to learn, and the motivation to learn. The adults today are just telling the kids what to do, even when it's after-school. After-school is our leisure time. It belongs to us. It is the time we can find our true motivation and interest. It is the time for exploration.

On the one hand, I agree with the adults that the after-school works also open our mind and teach us things we do not know before. But on the other hand, I still insist that those works limit our time to explore by ourselves. One of my friend, Wen-yen, now in his thirties near forty, is a owner of a bike shop near my house. When he was in high school, he does not go to cram schools or other classes. Instead, he fooled around with his friends on scooters, doing what adults consider “ bad” behaviors. However, his friends,

one day, showed him a type of bike called fixed gear, which was an old-school bike that does not have shifters and brakes.

At that time, there were no bike shops that imported fixed gears, so he makes one by himself. He bought the old Giant bike from his neighbor, borrowed tools from the scooter shop that he knew, and built his own fixed gear with his friends after school for fifteen days. Today, Wen-yen has his own fixed gear store, importing different bike parts to Taiwan and exporting his own bikes abroad. It is the after-school life that determines his ability, passion, and motivation. Although I grant that Wen-yen's luck may not apply to every kids, I still maintain that after-school time is necessary because it is the only time you can learn something outside of school.

Wen-yen can never learn how to built a fixed gear on his own at school. You may never know what's the best place to visit with your friends if you don't have after-school life. You may never know how to come up with games to play when you're bored. You may never explore the world if your after-school life is limited. After-school should not be related to school anymore. It should be a period for us to explore the unknown world by ourselves, with our friends, or with our family.

It is the end of a normal school day. We run out of our homes after leaving our backpacks home. We watch a new movie with friends, read the first book of a new sci-fis series, and go back home to finish our homework. After-school is so important because we can do what we love. These small actions can create happiness, and this happiness of after-school can turn out to be

better school performances, better determination, and better relationships with family and friends. Forget about grades and resumes.

The footage of our success builds upon our motivation, determination, and happiness. School may not be the only solution for plenty of kids to find these three fundamental elements, but after-school can serve as the possibility for them. It is the end of a normal school day, and the start of our own story.