

The concept of civic education



The concept of civic education had its origin in the ancient Greek city-states. 'Citizen' is the agent who react the 'state' politically. In Plato's ideal state, there are three classes of citizens: rulers, soldiers, and the people. 'Citizen' of the different levels should accept different civic education. Duties of good citizen are depend on their abilities and role in life. They should do what their best suited to do, and they should create value for society. For example, ruler must have the virtue of wisdom; soldiers should have the virtue of courage. And the rest of the people, such as merchants and farmers must exhibit the virtue of moderation. In my opinion, the organization of Plato's ideal city, every class's responsibility is clearly stated; it makes them know their place and cultivates their civic patriotism.

After World War II, some countries are aware that such a narrow view of the civic education leads a lot of contradictions. Therefore, patriotism begins to fade. It is not just talk about rights and obligations, but more emphasis on universal values, such as equality, freedom, justice, and aims to train students to become citizens of the world.

In the contemporary scholarship on civic education J. Mark Halstead believe that civic education should be analyzed according to three aspect, namely the 'about citizenship', the 'good citizenship' and the 'active citizenship'.

In 'about citizenship', civic education cultivate well-informed citizens. The 'good citizenship' emphasis students socialize in society, such as obedience, commitment, patriotism and authority of citizenship. In 'active citizenship', children should have active participation in the political, civil and social life of the community.

Davison and Arthur (2006) further stated that citizenship can be divided into passive citizenship and active citizenship.

In passive citizenship, as the member of society, citizen performs one's obligations, such as obey laws, be polite. Also, citizen develops the ability to participate in society individually. The development of the critical thinking, and enable an individual to participate in society are necessary for 'active citizenship'.

In Hong Kong, according to Leung, civic education cultivates the sense of belonging to China and the sense of pride of being a Chinese in 'One Country, Two Systems' policy.

According to the Basic Education Curriculum Guide of Moral and Civic Education, there are five priority values and attitudes that are essential to students' personal and social development, such as 'Perseverance, Respect for Others, Responsibility, National Identity and Commitment'.

The aim of civic education in Hong Kong is to help students to become knowledgeable and responsible citizens and committed to the well-being of their fellow humans.

In other hand, national education can be divided into five forms:

'cosmopolitan nationalism', 'civic nationalism', 'cultural nationalism', 'anti-colonial nationalism' and 'totalitarian nationalism'(Leung, 2002).

First, 'cosmopolitan nationalism' is the all human ethnic groups are who on his mind believe that people are equal and show respect, deep concern and love, in disregard of race, gender, nationality, religion, class and believe that the improvement of mankind is the responsibility of individuals.

Second, 'civic nationalism' defines the nation as an association of people with equal and shared political rights, in disregard of race, color, creed, gender, language or ethnicity. Citizen's participation in governing and policy of the nation is not limited.

Third, 'cultural nationalism' is a form of nationalism in which the high cohesion of nation by a shared culture. Cultural nationalism builds up a national identity by the same cultural traditions, historic territory, and the unity and national consciousness of the nation.

Fourth, 'Anti-colonial nationalism' defines the nation stand against oppressive, imperialist and colonial regimes. Citizen has strong desire to fight against foreign rulers of political and economic independence and racial equality.

Parmenter (2005) had proposed that national unity and national identity can be developed through national education. National education systems inevitably co-exist with nationalism. A nation can be unified by the administrative systems of national education systems. And become a sense of the 'imagined community' of the nation (Anderson, 1991).

The aim of National education feels they are take part in the national sense of belonging. Through National education, citizens are 'educated' to see themselves as part of the nation, and 'educated' into ways of behaving and thinking appropriately as a member of the nation (Reicher and Hopkins, 2001).

The Minister of Education in the People's Republic of China, Yuan Guiren claims that all nationals should receive national education. And the former

deputy director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, Chen Zuoer said that national education is essential in every nation, so Hong Kong people should have responsibility to contribute to the country. But some scholars refute the argument that why Hong Kong people have to accept to receive national education as a citizen. It showed the problem that there is a contradictory relationship between 'civic education' and 'national education'.

Parmenter (2005) holds that National unity and national identity thrive on difference with outsiders, and this is where national education can come into conflict with cosmopolitan identity and citizenship, which is based on the premise that all people are equal and similar citizens of the world.

First, 'National education' is too much emphasis on increasing sense of belonging. If national education emphasize on increasing sense of belonging in a large part, national education fosters patriotism. According to Leung, identity is a two-edged sword, it can build up national patriotism of citizens, but it can also lead to serious consequences. 'Totalitarian nationalism' represents the term 'patriotism'. It emphasizes the loyalty and absolute obedience to the state and the ideology of the party and its leaders. The love for the country is equivalent to the love for the ruling political party and its ideologies, and the citizen firmly believed that the ruling political party is the savior of the nation. Hong Kong people definitely reject education for totalitarian nationalism, because all related concepts communism, communist party, socialism and the politics in Mainland China. It very alien to people and political culture of Hong Kong people and they were afraid of the politics of Mainland China.

Also, Leung criticizes the education bureau discarded 'civic education' and change into "national education". 'National education' excludes the universal value of 'civic education'. Leung criticizes national education only focuses on emotional recognition, establish sense of identity through glory of nation. It will cover up all the faults of the party of nation, lack of criticism of the party, and ignore the civil and human rights. It not helps thinking about the discussion of human rights of the nation.

The core values of Hong Kong is freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law etc., is also known as the universal values of human rights, democracy, freedom. It is not expedient that Democracy and human rights is the value of belonging to the world of the country. Leung points out that the National domain of national education does not mention national issues from the point of view of the world. It may limit the horizons of the students, and narrow space of interpretation, lead the universal values change into the 'Chinese characteristic values'

'National education' emphasizes on patriotic rituals like flag raising ceremonies. The flag-raising ceremony of national flag and SAR flag is raised every morning once a month. According to Fairbrother, patriotic rituals such as the flag-raising ceremony are formalities that have no educational purpose but indoctrination.

Leung believes that national education emphasize the Emotion and national identity, it ignore the critical thinking. According to Cheng, positive teaching materials of national education cannot nurture a critical thinking attitude on the part of students. Worries about the essential areas of civic education, such as human rights, democratic education were neglected because the

national education is in high priority between national education and civic education.

Choi Po King pointed out that if the national education emphasized instill identify with the political consciousness of the country, it violate the principle of civic education, such as independent and critical thinking, emotional and irrational (Choi Po King, as cited in Leung, 1995).

The model of national education in China is outdated. Morley claims that a nation's shrinking national boundaries are shirked and blurred through travel, media and electronic networks. The concept of territorial identity and citizenship is not necessary. Also, the concepts of 'place', and specific 'place' of their location, are changing (Morley, 2000).

Parmenter (2005) holds that there is no theoretical reason why there are conflict between national education and civic citizenship because the coexistence of state and world citizenship are accepted in the ancient Greek. Individuals should realize that they have of multiple identities and they are in various territorial spheres of life. The concept of multiple identities is based on the notion of as a composite of multiple, often contradictory, self-understandings and identities. They think that they are " the I fluctuate among different and even opposed positions" (Hermans, Kempem & van Loon, 1992).

There is no contradiction between national identity and citizenship on the one hand, and cosmopolitan identity and citizenship. The co-existence of the two identities and citizenships is recognized to some extent in reality as well as theory.

'Cosmopolitanism is a way of viewing the world that among other things dispenses with national exclusivity, dichotomous forms of gendered and racial thinking and rigid separations between culture and nature. Such a sensibility would be open to the new spaces of political and ethical engagement that seeks to appreciate the ways in which humanity is mixed into intercultural ways of life.' (Stevenson, 2003)

The aim of such national education would be cosmopolitanism. It is because a critical and balanced national identity and sense of national citizenship can be achieved by the stimulation of the right of cosmopolitan identity and citizenship. People's horizons can widen through national education. People's identities not only focus on the nation, they can take a board view of the world.

The development of National education in Hong Kong is special, the identity of Hong Kong changes from a British colony into a Chinese Special Administrative Region. As early as in 1985, the Education Department 'Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools' require students to understanding China Affairs, patriotic and proud of being Chinese. Due to the political Environment, Hong Kong people's understanding of 'national identity' is not clear, national education commenced in the absence of clear national concept. Although schools teach Chinese language and Chinese history, but only focus on knowledge of subjects. Civic education focused on understanding of the society, and the practice of the citizens in the world, not stressed explicitly to develop students' sense of national identity.

The Guidelines on Civic Education in School (DCC, 1996) published in 1996 also emphasized education for human rights, democracy, education for the

rule of law, and national education, global education of critical thinking (Leung, Chai & Ng, 2000). But this guideline is just policy documents, it avoids the contradiction between national education and Civic Education, national education should not simply bring into Civic Education. The guidelines stressed democracy, the rule of law, human rights education and critical thinking. But in other side, it emphasizes students' positive values and attitudes and identity-building, and builds up a sense of closeness and belonging with the motherland. In my opinion, the aim of Civic Education, national education is different; it makes contradiction and confusion of identity.

The promotion of national education has become a central element in curriculum development since 1997. Soon after 1997, government circulars were issued to remind schools to raise the national flag on significant occasions and to use national symbols (Lee, 2008). Tung Chee-hwa , the first Chief Executive, highlighted national education and patriotism to develop a nation identity and called on the community to work together to foster patriotic Chinese citizens. In 2001 report on curriculum development, students should 'know their national identity; do their utmost to contribute to the country and to society'. But still labeled as 'civic education' and was promoted gradually through practice participation.

A National Education Center was also established under the management of a pro-China education body, the Federation of Education Workers, in 2004. I participated in a tour in A National Education Center about celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the victory in the Second Sino-Japanese War. One of the aims of the tour is 'strengthen the national identity of motherland'. I

visited lots of historical sights about the Second Sino-Japanese War and attend the seminar that titled 'three years and eight months', the period of the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. I listen seriously the history of Second Sino-Japanese War and her personal experiences. I am impressed with what she said about the difficulties in war and she thinks what she does in the war or giving seminars to primary and secondary school or public is a blessing for her, because she can do for the country. It makes me understand the truth of loving country, just pay, without asking for anything in return.

In 2007 Policy Address, The HKSAR Government promotes "grow to love our motherland and Hong Kong, aspire to win honor and make contributions for our country." The SAR government starts to promote National education from schools to communities. Nurturing awareness of national identity and national self-Sense of pride and a sense of responsibility there is interest in the implementation of "one country, two systems", to maintain Hong Kong and the country held continued development and prosperity.

In school, Teachers and students are sponsored to visit the mainland through exchange programmes in order to gain a better understanding of the current development of China and to develop a sense of national identity through personal experience. In 2004, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB, later renamed EDB, the Education Bureau) launched a national education programme as part of the youth leadership award scheme, arranging for one hundred and seventy student leaders to enroll in an 11-day programme in Beijing (Lee, 2008).

Teachers, school middle managers and principals have also been invited to subsidized training programmes co-organized by local universities and mainland universities every year in the last decade (Lee, 2008).

According to the Policy Address 2008, the government has injected additional resources to provide more extensive mainland exchange opportunities for pupils, including upper primary and junior secondary students. The 'Tonggen Tongxin' (same root, same heart) programme, first introduced in 2008-9 by the EDB, is specially organized for upper primary and junior secondary students. In the school year of 2010-2011, the said programme provides 16 itineraries with designated themes accommodating 27, 000 places for participating local teachers and students.

In addition, a consultation paper on the Moral and National Education Curriculum (EDB, 2011) was released early this year suggesting Hong Kong students to receive further political socialization in the primary and secondary school, with national education as an independent subject.

The guidelines on patriotic rituals from the EDB put great amount of resources into schools, communities and media to promote nationalistic education, the elements of citizenship education become unbalanced and not included in the mainstream curriculum, such as human rights, democracy and social justice(Tse, 2007).

In my school, my music teachers teach students singing the national anthem in music lessons and school assemblies. The British national anthem 'God save the Queen' was regarded as the anthem for Hong Kong before reverting to China in 1997. After 1997, 'March of the Volunteers', the anthem of the

People's Republic of China became Hong Kong's anthem, it boosts teenagers' sense of belonging to their country. Although I don't have Liberal Studies lesson, my History teacher likes to tell us the current news and analyze the pros and cons of opinions. Also, my school invited some scholars for seminar, such as Allen Lee Peng Fei.

In communities, the international competition and events can foster Hong Kong people's sense of belonging of China. The HKSAR government invited some famous national sportsmen, who succeeded winning in the Beijing Olympics attend the reunification celebration events in Hong Kong Stadium. The first spacewalk by a Chinese astronaut also heightened the sense of belonging of being Chinese, because Hong Kong people take pride in the athletes. It tightened links between Hong Kong and China.

Television announcements in public, an anthem plays in 'Our Home Our Country' before 6: 30 news report; it shows the pictures of different classes of Chinese people, it means the Chinese people should stay together. The TV broadcasting programs 'A Bite of China' is a Chinese documentary television series about the traditional Chinese cuisine all around China in 2012. But it just show the positive way of China, such as Chinese culture. If Hong Kong people ignore the negative site of China, it limits the thinking and become political indoctrination because the ultimate goal of civic education is to cultivate rational, independent, critical thinking and active participation of citizens.

National Education cultivates students agree with the identity of the Chinese and enhance the students' awareness of Chinese identity by participation

and contribution of local, national and world affairs. There are the things that can enhance citizens' identity and a sense of belonging. In my opinion, I don't think that patriotism can be taught just like you cannot teach someone how to love somebody or something. I think every Hong Kong people should have a right to choose whether he or she love his or her country and agree or not with the culture of China, and a feeling that they are part of China. To make these decisions, Hong Kong people should understand more about their country China in three different ways. If most of the Hong Kong people have high standard of critical thinking, a mature civic society can be appear.

In conclusion, citizenship education could contribute to the development of open-minded national education for cosmopolitan and liberal cities like Hong Kong.