



ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION: CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION, LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: 2017/2018 TDG PROJECT (REF: T0186)

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Introduction

Citizenship education includes various elements, including:

- Rights and responsibilities;
- Participation;
- Human rights education;
- Education for democracy; and
- Education for social justice, etc.

There is a concern that citizenship education in Hong Kong schools increasingly focus on promoting Chinese nationalistic education, while other elements (e.g. human rights education, education for democracy and education for social justice) have been squeezed out from the mainstream curriculum in Hong Kong (Leung, 2008; Tse, 2007).

In fact, teaching social justice in tertiary institutions is an international trend. Tertiary institutions (such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, etc.) are opening more and more degree and master's programs in social justice.

Introduction

- The promotion of social justice in the classroom can develop students to possess a greater critical consciousness, a sense of awareness about inequality and the need for justice (Freire, 1970; Pitner and Sakamoto, 2005).
- A perspective of social justice can offer a citizenship angle in helping students to understand and analyze the current social issues at hand.
- Based on these premises, the author designed and implemented a TDG (Teaching Development Grant) project which aims at designing social justice education curriculum and developing teaching materials, and using the teaching materials to teach in one General Education and one BEd(P) Major General Studies course at undergraduate level in 2017/2018 academic year, and then keep teaching it since then.



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Debates about social justice

- Constantine et al. (2007) portrayed social justice as **fair and equal distribution of resources, rights and treatment for everyone**, regardless of **their immigration status, race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, religious heritage, physical ability, or sex orientation**.
- North (2008) summarized that social justice has mostly been defined in two ways:
 1. Resources
 2. Recognition
- Some concentrated their efforts on demands for equitable social processes, including recognition and dignity for marginalized or subjugated groups (e.g. Young, 1990, 2011), while some others emphasized on pursuing fairer distribution of resources (e.g. Rawls, 1999, 2001).



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UN Definition of social justice

- “Social justice may be broadly understood as the **fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth**” (United Nations, 2006, 7).
- It also maintained that “the conception of social justice must integrate these dimensions, starting with the right of all human beings to benefit from a **safe and pleasant environment**; this entails the fair distribution among countries and social groups of the cost of protecting the environment and of **developing safe technologies for production and safe products for consumption**” (United Nations, 2006, 7).
- Moreover, the report emphasized **sustainable growth** and **respecting the integrity of the natural environment and resources** so that **future generations** can be able to enjoy a **beautiful and hospitable world**.



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Social Justice Education (SJE)

- SJE courses do not only convey content but also engage participants in examining social identities, power, privilege, and structural inequalities in our society and in their own lives (Adams, 2016).
- Hackman (2005): SJE pays close attention to the systems of power and privilege that worsen social inequality and facilitates learners to critically analyze oppression on institutional, cultural and individual levels, as well as searches opportunities for taking action for social change.
- Adams, Bell and Griffin (1997): define social justice as both a process and a goal. "The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure."



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Social Justice Education (SJE)

- SJE has been confluent with some concepts including:
 1. multicultural education,
 2. critical pedagogy,
 3. queer theory,
 4. postmodernism,
 5. post-colonialism, etc. (Adams, 2016).
- Other supporting concepts in espousing the goals of SJE: inclusion, diversity, equality, well-being of individuals and societies, critical analysis, transformative learning, feminism, development education, global citizenship education, etc.



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Social Justice Study Unit

- The social justice study unit includes 3 x three-hour classroom teaching, so this unit has a total of nine hours of classroom instruction. There was a 3 hour intercultural understanding and exploration at Sikh Temple at Wanchai, so as to develop the students' sense of racial equality.
- 53 students participated in the social justice study unit.
- 27 were from the G.E. module of Civic Values, Character Formation and Positive Education
- 26 were from the BEd(P) General Studies module of Perspectives on Citizenship



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Jul – Sept, 2017
Preparation of teaching plan and materials

Teaching Cycle 1
27 students from the course of GEK 1004 Civic Values, Character Formation and Positive

Sept, 2017
Students completed a pre-teaching questionnaire just before the first lecture

Sept – Oct, 2017
Start teaching three lectures of social justice study unit

Oct, 2017
Students completed a pre-teaching questionnaire just before the first lecture

Oct, 2017
A focus group interview was held one week after the completion of study unit

Nov - Dec, 2017
Review and Evaluation

Teaching Cycle 2
26 students from the course of SSSC3054 Perspectives on Citizenship

Feb, 2018
Students completed a pre-teaching questionnaire just before the first lecture

Feb - Mar, 2018
Start teaching three lectures of social justice study unit

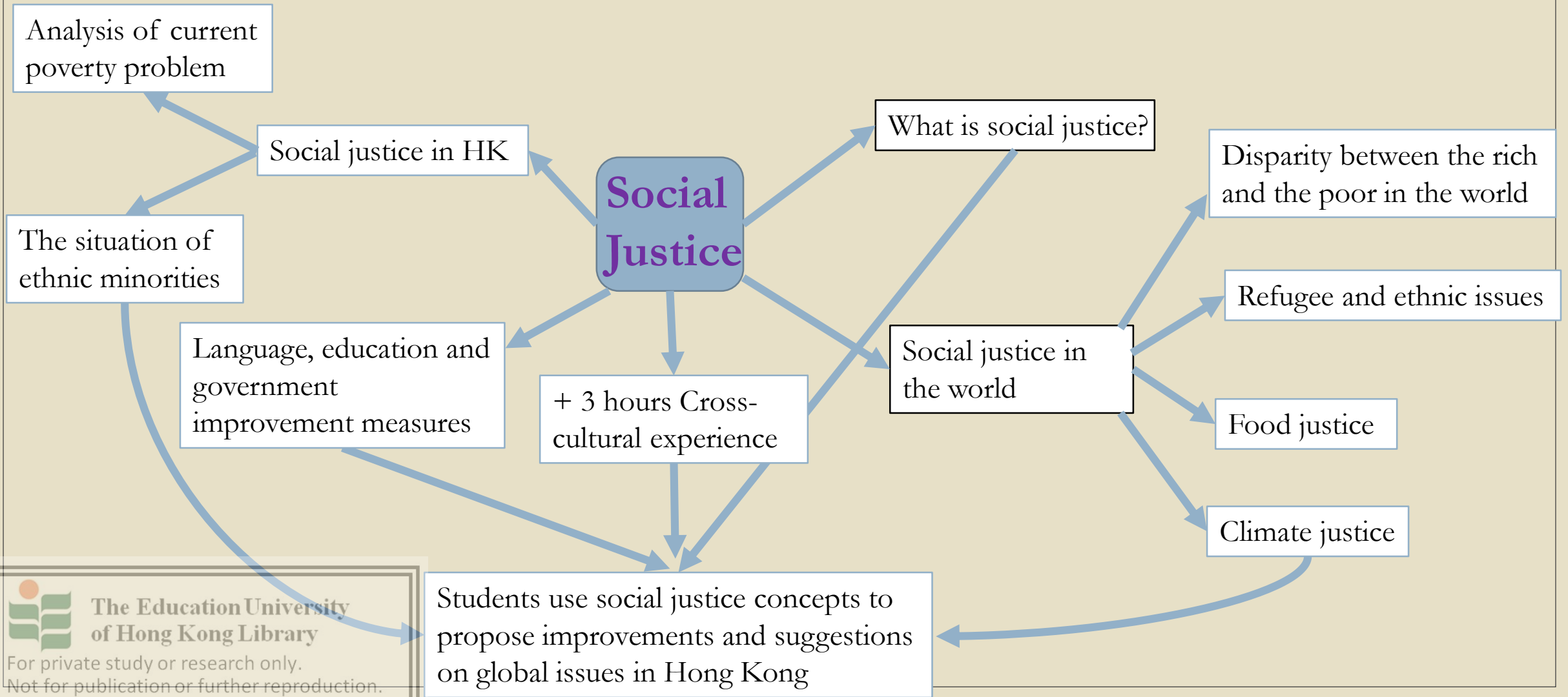
Mar, 2018
Students completed a post-teaching questionnaire right after the third lecture

Mar, 2018
A focus group interview was held one week after the completion of study unit

Apr – Sept, 2018
Analysis of the evaluation data, for dissemination



Thematic map (Three lectures)



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SJE Goals

According to Bell (2016), the goals of SJE include:

1. Enabling individuals to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand the structural features of oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems;
2. Helping participants to develop awareness, knowledge, and processes to examine issues of justice/injustice in their personal lives, communities, institutions, and the broader society;
3. Connecting analysis to action;
4. Helping participants to develop a sense of agency and commitment, as well as skills and tools, for working with others to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviours in themselves and in the institutions and communities of which they are a part.



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SJE Curriculum Design

◦ This study unit design was underpinned by previous SJE research as the theoretical basis. The study unit emphasised on:

- 1. Developing a critical consciousness**
- 2. Establishing open and democratic classroom**
- 3. Conducting various class activities**
- 4. Using everyday life examples**
- 5. Recognizing constructive solutions**



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SJE Curriculum Design

1. Developing a critical consciousness

- Bell (2016) suggested that social justice learners should be built upon a **critical consciousness**. Critical consciousness means “working in solidarity with others to question, analyze, and challenge oppressive conditions in their lives rather than blame each other or fate.” (Bell, 2016, 38).
- Developing **critical consciousness** aims to build an awareness of the social and political factors which contribute to the creation of oppression; to analyze how oppression sustain and also the various stakeholder in the system; and to take action.



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SJE Curriculum Design

- 2. **Establishing open and democratic classrooms**
- Picower (2012): social justice educators have to be able to work both inside and outside of their classrooms for social change.
- develop caring and respectful relationships with students, create a democratic classrooms, and enable their students to analyze and challenge oppression.
- facilitates students to express their real thoughts comfortably. The lecturer utilized class activities such as group discussion, group debates, mind map, and presentation, to encourage students speaking out their thinking and analysis in front of other students.



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SJE Curriculum Design

◦ 3. Conducting various class activities

Class activities are essential when teaching social justice because participants may have a variety of backgrounds, interests, expectations, needs, previous experiences and learning preferences, and that may contribute to meaningful discussion among participants.

Examples of activities include video, small group discussions, large group discussions, group presentation, writing prompts, case studies, role play, brainstorming, and worksheets, etc.



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SJE Curriculum Design

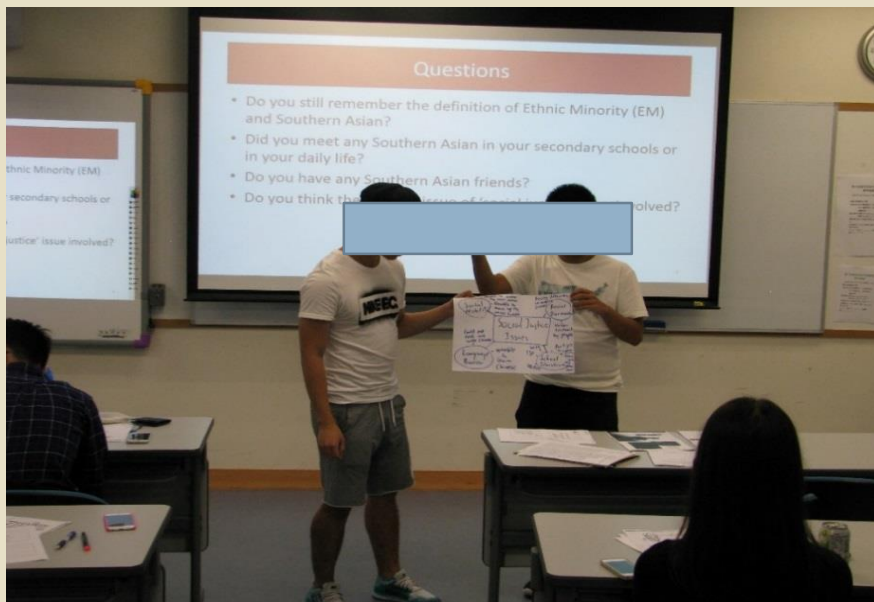
- **4. Using everyday life examples**
- Freire (1970) suggested that the pedagogical materials should be drawn from the everyday lives of participants, and were recognizable and meaningful to them. Indeed, using examples which participants usually encounter in their real-life can facilitate participants' imagination and understanding of the concepts.
- For instance, the TDG project study unit used EdUHK's facilitation of disability and real case in Hong Kong as examples of promoting social justice.



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Learning activities



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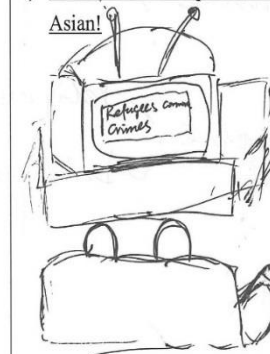
Staying positive – Refugees in Hong Kong

Watch the PPT by Amnesty International

Activity 1

How 'Disadvantaged' communities struggle: please critically examine social stereotyping on South Asians living in Hong Kong, especially those who are working as occasional jobs in Hong Kong.

- 1) Who are they? Can you tell who are they after watching the video?
They are asylum seekers.
Escaping from their countries, because they are ethnic group.
- 2) What are common perceptions of Hong Kong people on South Asian peoples?
Lack of awareness about ^{how} the refugees or poor people of South Asian people live in HK.
Some people ~~for~~ are afraid of them.
- 3) Why do such perceptions exist in Hong Kong? Please give some reasons
1. The media sometimes ~~passed~~ misleading the people.
2. Stereotypes of people.
- 4) Please draw some pictures of common Hong Kong people's perception towards South Asian!



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SJE Curriculum Design

- 5. Recognizing constructive solutions

- Yates & Youniss (1999): helping others who are in need could lead students to recognize that their plight reflects injustice.

- The study unit emphasized how local governments and NGOs, as well as international organizations, have attempted to lesson social injustice situations so that learners can recognize constructive solutions to solve or improve social injustice

- Guiding students to realize injustice in society, the learners can understand "who are fighting for social justice" and "what I could do".



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Social Justice education study unit

- Various perspectives of social justice were introduced in the first lecture, including John Rawls (1971), David Millar (1976), and the United Nations (2006).
- In the second and third lectures, four social injustice issues were introduced. Students were encouraged and asked to apply the above social justice perspectives in studying the social issues. The four social injustice issues included:

1. economic justice
2. racial justice
3. climate justice
4. food justice



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1. Exploring Economic Justice – context exploration

- The Census and Statistics Department (2017) reported that Hong Kong is the world's second-most unequal city in terms of income, according to the household income distribution.
- The gradually increase of Gini coefficient of Hong Kong indicates the income inequality is continually increasing, from 0.518 in 1996 to 0.539 in 2016.

Hong Kong's Gini coefficient : Original household income

Year	Gini coefficient
1996	0.518
2001	0.525
2006	0.533
2011	0.537
2016	0.539



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Source: Census and Statistics Department

2. Perspective taking: Racial Justice

- The advocacy of Mother-tongue education and Moral and National education might imply that the government forgot or ignored a small group of Hong Kong residents in the society – Ethnic minorities, who are not Chinese and cannot speak in Cantonese or Mandarin.
- With more emphasis on ‘biliteracy and trilingualism’, failing to be proficient in Chinese would compromise academic performance and undermine the chance of getting into a post-secondary institution.



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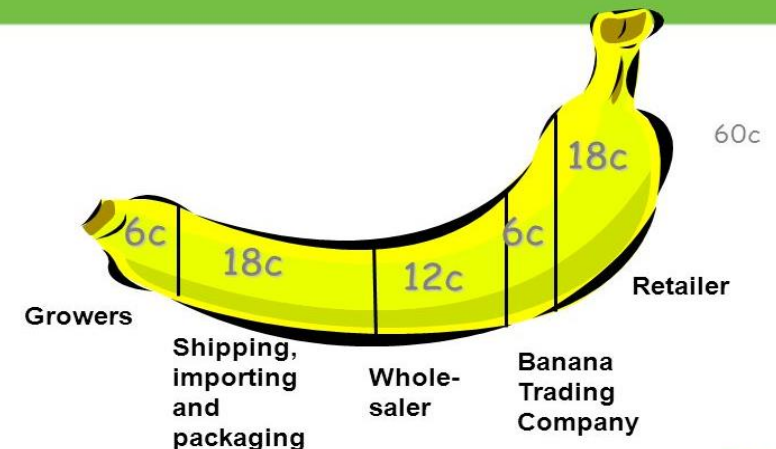
3. Food Justice

Acknowledgement:
Oxfam GB

- There is enough food for everyone in the world. However, the food system is not working properly.
- Under this unfair system, 1 in 7 people in the world, or nearly nine hundred million people go hungry every day, 80% of them are small-scale food producers. Many of them are women (Oxfam, 2013).
- Among undernourished people, a large proportion of them are food producers, such as small-scale farmer, Pastoralist, and Fisherfolk. They are food producers. However, they are hungry. Is this just?
- Over 50% of the population in more than half of industrialized countries are becoming overweight. It is because there are deep imbalances in the way resources are controlled.



Split of Income



(This activity is adapted from Go Bananas, Oxfam 2000)

OXFAM'S
MORNING TEA

4. Climate Justice

- The Earth's climate is rapidly changing, mainly as a result of increases in greenhouse gases caused by human activities.
- The poorest 50% of the world's population is responsible for just 10% of carbon emissions, while the world's richest 10% produce around 50% of all emissions (Oxfam, 2015).
- For instance, the total emissions of the poorest half of the population of China, around 600 million people, are only one-third of the total emissions of the richest 10% in the United States, some 30 million people.
- More importantly, those poor countries accounted for less emission but being the most threatened by the catastrophic storms, droughts, and other severe weather shocks linked to climate change due to their poor infrastructure and disaster control.



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Recommendations on teaching methods

1. selecting social and global issues that students have life-experiences
2. group collaborative works
3. using concept map to enable students know how to apply the social justice concept
4. using peer group presentation for peer learning
5. Utilize the multi-ethnicities in your classroom to introduce knowledge and living experiences for analyzing and application of social justice in the society
6. Cultivating free and democratic classroom and learning environment
7. Inviting expert for talks to increase students understanding



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Action Research Questions

Throughout this project, we attempted to explore the effectiveness of the teaching, thus a few research hypotheses were raised:

1. It is hypothesized that the participants will grade a significant higher score on their self-report of learning about the society in the post-test.
2. It is hypothesized that the participants will grade a significant higher score on Wang et al. (2003)'s Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (SEE) (accept cultural differences and have empathic awareness), and also have a more positive perception on the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong in the post-test.
3. It is hypothesized that the participants will show a significant increase in their interest in a career in community work in the post-test.



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Methodology

We evaluate the effectiveness of this project by employing a **sequential mixed-methods design**, evaluation methods included:

1. Quantitative course evaluation (pre- & post- learning evaluation)
- 2 .Qualitative course evaluation (focus groups)

The design includes the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The integration of the two methods provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem than either of each alone.



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1. Quantitative Course Evaluation

Participants

- 48 out of 53 participants finally completed both of the pre- and post- teaching questionnaires
- Mean age= 19.92, SD=1.38, Range=19-25
- 33 Local Hong Kong Chinese, 13 Mainland Chinese, 1 Myanmar, 1 Filipino
- 36 respondents indicated they had no religion, 12 respondents indicated they had religions.
- Among the 12 participants indicating they had religion, 2 Christian, 1 Buddhist, and 1 Catholic were recorded, with 8 did not reveal their religion.



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Table 1: Paired Samples Statistics: Students' Course Satisfaction

		Mean	N	SD
Pair 1	I will gain a deeper understanding of things I learned about in this course.	3.90	48	.59
	I gained a deeper understanding of things I learned about in this course.	4.06	48	.67
*Pair 2	I will learn to apply concepts from my course to real situations.	3.79	48	.71
	I learned to apply concepts from my course to real situations.	4.04	48	.62
Pair 3	I will become more interested in the field contained in this course.	3.77	48	.80
	I became more interested in the field contained in this course.	3.94	48	.89
Pair 4	I will better understand the role of a professional in this field.	3.71	48	.68
	I better understand the role of a professional in this field.	3.91	48	.72
*Pair 5	I will become more interested in a career in community work.	3.77	48	.88
	I became more interested in a career in community work.	3.86	48	.69
**Pair 6	I will learn about the community.	3.89	48	.63
	I learned about the community.	4.23	48	.75
Pair 7	I will learn how to work with others effectively.	3.86	48	.68
	I learned how to work with others effectively.	3.92	48	.85
Pair 8	I will learn to appreciate different cultures.	4.15	48	.65
	I learned to appreciate different cultures.	4.33	48	.72
Pair 9	I will learn to see social problems in a new way.	4.10	48	.63
	I learned to see social problems in a new way.	4.32	48	.67
Pair 10	I will become more aware of the community of which I am a part.	3.98	48	.67
	I became more aware of the community of which I am a part.	4.04	48	.71

Result

The post-teaching test shows that all of the ten items' scores climbed up, with three items climbed up significantly.

*p-value is less than 0.05
**p-value is less than 0.01



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Results

Table 2: Paired Samples Test: Empathic Awareness Scale

Pre-test – Post-test comparison	Mean	SD	95% CI		t	Sig.
			Lower	Upper		
I am aware of how society differentially treats racial or ethnic groups other than my own.	-.25	.86	-.50	.00	-2.01	.051
I recognize that the media often portrays people based on racial or ethnic stereotypes.	-.27	.77	-.50	-.04	-2.37	.022
I can see how other racial or ethnic groups are systematically oppressed in our society.	-.44	.77	-.66	-.21	-3.94	.000
I am aware of institutional barriers (e.g., restricted opportunities for job promotion) that discriminate against racial or ethnic groups other than my own.	-.48	1.03	-.78	-.18	-3.22	.002

The post-teaching test indicates that the students tended to empathize with individuals of racial or ethnic backgrounds different from theirs after finishing the social justice study unit.

Results

Table 3: Paired Samples Test: Perception towards South Asians and Understanding of Local Charities or Non-government Organizations

Pre-test – Post-test comparison	Mean	SD	95% CI		t	Sig.
			Lower	Upper		
Overall, is your perception about South Asians incline towards positive or negative? Please use 0-10 for your answer (0=extremely negative, 10=extremely positive)	-.60	1.35	-1.16	-.04	-2.22	.036
Do you know the functions of below charities or on-government organizations (Food angel, Crossroads foundation, Po Leung Kuk, St. James' Settlement, Justice Centre Hong Kong, Harmony House, Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, Oxfam, Unison)?	-.83	1.69	-1.58	-.18	-2.60	.016

Result indicates that participants tended to have more understandings about local charities or non-government organizations after the completion of the study unit.

2. Qualitative Course Evaluation

- Six students are willing to accept the focus discussion.
- They are 3 boys and 3 girls.
- Among them, 3 are Chinese mainlanders, 2 are local Chinese, and 1 is Filipino.



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Excerpt 1

- *I think learning social justice is very important in Hong Kong. It helps us to widen our horizon and to think from multiple perspectives of how to respect ourselves and respect others around us. (Focus Group A, Christian)*

Multiple perspectives

Excerpt 2

- *I was really surprised when I knew the situations of asylum seekers in Hong Kong. I was like shock, and also confused because the problem is really not easy to be solved. This is really worth for us to know about this issue. (Focus Group A, Tina)*

Reality shock

Excerpt 3

- *I think the most impressive part is learning about the genocide and refugees. I know the genocide in China such as the genocide in Nanjing. But for refugees, I do not know is there any refugee from other countries came to China because I have never met them. I think this class gives me some knowledge about refugee and what is their life in HK. (Focus Group A, Lorna)*

Knowing about genocide and refugee

Excerpt 4

- *I really feel interested in learning about climate justice because I have never learnt about this topic during my secondary education. It is logical that there is climate injustice in the world. However, I have never gone that deep into the issue and have never deliberated the causes behind. This time, I have studied into the issue deeply and that may have a profound effect on my future teaching. (Focus Group A, Sherry)*

Climate injustice



Putting Social justice in the university education

Excerpt 5

- I think teaching social justice in the university is necessary. People living in the society are too busy and are rare to use a social justice perspective to judge certain social issues. During lecture, the lecturer taught us about the definition of social justice and applied it into certain social issues. The social justice study unit really provided me an opportunity to view the social controversial issues from a different angle. (Focus Group A, Tina)*

Excerpt 6

- I hope the university can teach students about social justice. Particularly, I suggest that students who study General Studies and Liberal Studies should learn about social justice, because many of them will teach relevant topics in primary or secondary schools. They should have responsibility to deliver the message to the next generation. (Focus Group A, Sherry)*

Excerpt 7

- I have never learnt about the concept of social justice until I study in the university, maybe because I studied in Mainland China for my primary and secondary education. I think the university should teach the students about social justice. I also think it should be promoted in the universities in Mainland China. Social justice should exist in a society and I think learning social justice is meaningful. (Focus Group B, Alex)*

Excerpt 8

- It is certainly necessary to teach social justice in the university. University is an institution which develops its students to build a better society by teaching unique knowledge at a deep level. This is what I expect to learn in the university. We should cherish the opportunity to learn about social justice. (Focus Group B, Tony)*

Excerpt 9

- *I have a greater perception toward South Asians after the course, maybe because I have more understanding about them and know more about their culture and hard lives in Hong Kong. (Focus Group A, Tina)*

Changing
perception

Excerpt 10

- *I still think although HK is an international society, people living here still have stereotype about like Mainland people or ethnic minorities. I think the schools need to have an instructor or a teacher to lead students into a more broaden way to widen their horizon to tell the people living in HK that the ethnic minorities are not that bad. (Focus Group A, Lorna)*

Reflection about
Hong Kong

Excerpt 11

- *I am interested in Ethnic Minorities issues. In the university, there also has many South Asian students. It is good to know deeply about what is the racial problem so that we can build a more united and harmonious society. (Focus Group B, Tony)*

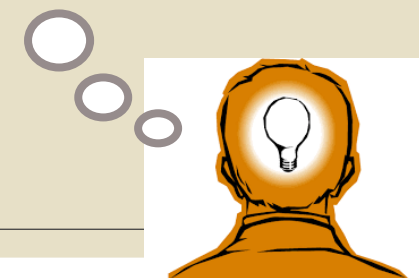
Learning about
ethnic minorities

Excerpt 12

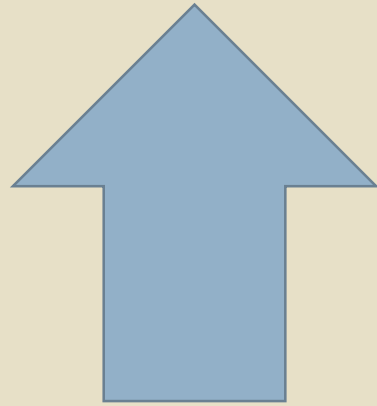
- *I think this study unit can be adjusted to a junior level, so that it can be promoted to primary and secondary schools. This can benefit them (Focus Group A, Sherry).*



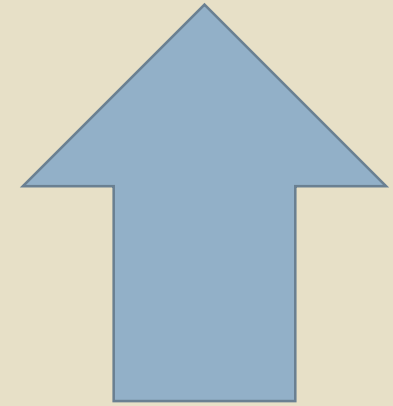
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Discussion



- **Enhancement of students' social justice knowledge**
 - **Increasing understandings of the community**
- **Raising of empathic awareness towards ethnic minorities**
 - **Improving the perception toward South Asians**
- **Increasing willingness to engage in community work**



- After the teaching, quantitative and qualitative research were implemented. The analysis found that the students' knowledge of social justice were enhanced and they have developed positive views of ethnic minorities. Also, students' empathic awareness and willingness to engage in community work were increased.
- In addition, focus group interviews found out that participants tended to have a better perception towards South Asians because they have deepened their understanding of the South Asians through the study units. That is consistent with the previous research.



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Discussion & Conclusion

- Their changes may be due to the participants knew more about the social injustice issues in Hong Kong and in the world, thus developing a sense of empathy toward those disadvantaged groups suffering from poverty and racial discrimination.
- The empathy attitude motivated them to help the disadvantaged people coming out of poor situations by considering a career of community work.
- In other words, the study unit may have developed a sense of social justice among the participants so that they have become more interested in working for lessening social injustice, for example, by volunteering for social services.



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Deliverable

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香港教育大學
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Enhancing student learning through Social
Justice Education: Conceptual clarification,
learning and teaching methods

2017/2018 TDG project (Ref: T0186)

A Teaching Guidebook for Social Justice Educators



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Social Sciences
社會科學系

Resource Centre for
Interdisciplinary and
Liberal Studies
跨學科及通識教育研究中心

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Reference

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