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January 2005 (No.10)

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Editorial The Economic Benefits of A Humanities Education

摘要

人文教育的經濟效益

香港向來並不重視人文教育。在向“知識型經濟”轉型的呼聲下香港人更益相信只有工程醫學科技財務會計法律等才有經濟效益，以為人文教育甚至社會科學只堪作消閒清談，談不上經濟效益。然而，人文教育足以使我們明白一切經濟活動均應以提高人民生活的素質和文明為目標。否則，縱使我們有呼風喚雨的能力，人與人之間只知爭做龍頭、做第一，爭建全球最高的大廈、最宏偉的“地標”，我們還不是浪費資源破壞社會凝聚力、破壞社會資本？人文教育成功，就不會有安龍事件，也不會出現短樁事件。其經濟效益決不亞於科技和商貿金融的教育。

A humanities education, properly delivered, is probably the economically most productive education one can ever acquire. When I say economically most productive, I mean two things: that it can result in more economical utilization of our resources thus avoiding waste, and that it can enhance

the quality of the human life, which should be the objective of all productive activities.

This of course is a most provocative proposition in Hong Kong, where it is traditionally and widely believed that humanities is at most a past time and at worst a waste of money. It is traditionally assumed that what make the "knowledge based society" tick are engineering, medical, and professional education, and science and technology, while literature, drama, music, religion, cultural studies, philosophy etc. do not really contribute to the knowledge based society. A humanities education, it is pointed out, will never deliver a human being to the moon. It will not do much good in helping us fight cancer, and or helping us erect bridges or high rise buildings. So how can a humanities education be economically productive?

Paradoxically, a humanities education is productive exactly because it tells us that there are far more urgent matters than delivering a human being to the moon, that the race for space supremacy and for military supremacy is wasteful of our precious resources, that building taller and taller buildings is nothing to be proud of, and that the world can be much more wonderful and enjoyable if people devote their time and energy more to improving the quality of the human life for everybody than if they set their minds just on cutting costs and lifting profits. Still, a humanities education is, let it be made totally clear, not anti-capitalism or anti-globalization. It is about a mind set that puts the human life above everything else and that capitalism, profits, globalization, laws, culture, entertainment, politics, bridges, buildings—and indeed everything—mean nothing except when they enhance the quality of the human life.

A humanities education puts things in perspective, rather than letting the ego take over our lives. Everything, from religion to music to science

to politics to law, should enrich and improve our lives. In contrast, someone who has never been exposed to humanities education keeps pursuing elusive goals without knowing why they are doing what they are doing. In pursuing their elusive goals they also fight with one another and they spend valuable resources fighting one another. Without knowing it they are wasting resources even as they earn profits. In minimizing costs they instead often end up unloading costs upon others. In striving for higher productivity they instead sacrifice the interests of fellow workers.

Many of us have been used to the idea that education is either a “consumption good” or an “investment good.” According to this commonly shared view, as a consumption good, education brings “utility” to the consumer when the “education good” is consumed. As an investment good, it benefits the investor through higher future incomes. But a humanities education belongs to neither of these categories. It is not consumed like food is eaten and then gone. It also may not necessarily bring higher future incomes. A good humanities education would have us assess the joys and sorrows of the human experience through history, so we can learn from our ancestors. It allows us to find meaning in what we do. It knits us together and cultivate social capital thus enabling us to tackle problems together. It takes us away from elusive and even silly pursuits and refocuses our minds to the quality of the human life. It makes us into more responsible individuals and allows us to become masters of our own lives.

A humanities education allows us to appreciate why Dr. Albert Schweitzer and Mother Theresa did what they did. The former spent his life helping the poor and the sick in Africa, The latter spent her life taking care of the old and orphans in India, Their work did not make them millionaires or billionaires, But they have made our world immensely more livable and more beautiful, A quality humanities education makes us humble and more sensitive to the needs and aspirations of others. If it reduces conflicts between human beings and nations and enables us to achieve peace, the economic benefits would be huge. We would have avoided so much destruction and saved so many lives and so much medical costs. Is it "consumption"? Is it "investment"? If it is both or either, it is certainly not in the traditional sense as we understand it.

Philanthropy, Government, and Social Capital

Lok Sang Ho
Director, Centre for Public Policy Studies

摘要

慈善行為是社會資本的重要組成部分。互相關顧是社會凝聚力之本，但慈善行為不應取代政府提供社會安全網的角色。社會安全網是維護不幸人士的根本，必須集體承擔以保健全。慈善行為作為自願的關顧行為決不能保證社會安全網對不幸人士能提供即時和足夠的支援。本文探討民間的慈善行為在社會的角色和政府的角色應如何互相配合。

Where does philanthropy fit in?

Philanthropy is part of the “care culture.” Philanthropists are people who care and who cherish a dream, a dream of building a better society. The care culture is part of social capital that empowers a society and makes it capable of moving forward and dealing with difficulties that may come along.

Philanthropy is a voluntary activity. Because it is voluntary, we cannot expect philanthropy to be able to provide us with an adequate social safety net, which we want to ensure to be available for all those who need it. So philanthropy is no substitute for the social safety net.

The social safety net is basic. Ideally philanthropists do not have to lend a hand to help anyone to protect him from the worst misfortunes, since if philanthropists have to play this role, it means the social safety net is inadequate and there is a good chance some of the unfortunate will not get help when they need it. We do not want to see, for instance, a world in which children who have lost their parents to rely on voluntary help in order to survive. We want to make sure that they survive, that they get nourishment and education, and that they get medical help when they fall sick.

Philanthropists give for the causes they believe in: so the activity reflects their values. There are those who want to give to promote the arts, to protect the environment, to preserve biodiversity, to

encourage and to support medical research, etc. Thus, the Bill and Melinda Foundation fights infectious diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis B. Eli Broad pledged 60 million dollars in 2003 to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

In practice, however, the social safety net has many holes, and philanthropists go a long way to fill those holes. But we should know that this is not ideal. Philanthropists who care must do their part to ensure the integrity of the social safety net. This is at least as important as the giving of money. This being the case, it will be against the cause of philanthropy, against the care culture, for philanthropists to shun their tax paying responsibilities. Governments need sufficient revenue in order to fund the social safety net.

There are philanthropists who believe that the government should be “small” and they try every means to get a tax shelter. This might make sense if the government is really too big: i.e., is doing things that it should not be doing, or if the government is known to be very inefficient and thus is wasting money. But providing an adequate social safety net and providing good education to every child are things that every government should do. Philanthropists should pay their share of taxes and ensure that the government does its duties.

Who Can Give

Not everybody can give. Some firms and individuals are struggling to survive, so they are not in the position to give, at least not in a way that makes a difference. However, many firms and individuals are very well positioned to give. While giving should be voluntary the rich should be reminded that their riches are not entirely due to their own merits. They may have benefited from their monopoly positions which may have been brought about by various reasons, including historical reasons. They may have earned very handsome economic rent through access to international markets that has now been made possible by modern technology, for which millions of people have worked hard in order to achieve the penetration. For example, Google and Amazon.com would not have been so successful had it not been for the cheap computers that are churning out from China and elsewhere, where workers earned very meager wages. Many successful movie stars, sportsmen or sportswomen, and singers achieved their success through hard work and with their talents, but it is

again the access to international markets that had made them so rich. Some of the super-rich made their fortune because globalization has availed them of cheap labor and large markets. But while the market situation is very favorable to them, it was quite unfavorable to those general workers who have to compete with millions of others for the few jobs that are available. Hundreds of millions of people work very hard for very meager wages, and they work productively, but they can hardly make enough to make a comfortable life. Philanthropists true to their cause need to think of them and support research that can alleviate poverty and hunger.

Volunteers cf. Donors

Many people, instead of giving money, offer their time. These givers of time serve the same causes as the philanthropists although they are seldom recognized as such. In some cases, the donations in kind may be worth a lot, and may transcend national boundaries. Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the world wide web, has chosen not to patent his invention thus benefiting billions of people. The amount that he gave up is reckoned to be in billions of US dollars.

The Costs and Benefits of Philanthropy and Voluntary Services

There are costs as well as benefits to philanthropy. Some of the benefits accrue to the philanthropists, some to the beneficiaries, and some to the rest of society. There are of course also some costs to philanthropy. However, in so far as philanthropy is philanthropy, and voluntary service is voluntary service, the net benefits must be positive.

Philanthropists benefit spiritually if they believe they are serving a good cause, in which case they are doing what they want and thus gain peace of mind. They benefit from seeing that others benefit, and that the society in which they live is getting better off with their help. More important, they help build a caring society. Andrew Carnegie gave most of his wealth away—some 350 million dollars in total—an astronomical amount in his day, and had always held that while it was alright to accumulate a vast fortune when one is alive, “a man who dies rich dies disgraced.”

It cannot be denied that some philanthropists and volunteers may give not so much for the benefit

of others as for their own personal gain, through recognition, sales and profit, etc. According to Paul Johnson, the well known British historian, donations to some are a demonstration of wealth. "The ancients had a phrase," he wrote in Forbes, " 'as rich as Croesus.' Croesus was the King of Lydia,...., and his wealth was measured by his generous donations to the religious shrines." However, it is counter-productive to allege or to imply that any specific philanthropic act is for recognition or personal gain. The fact is that philanthropy and voluntary services are always a gesture of care and do help people and should therefore be encouraged. Thus, it was certainly a sign of immaturity or lack of understanding that years ago, students of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University protested against naming a campus building with the name of Run Run Shaw to mark Sir Run Run's donations. Society needs to give philanthropists the full recognition that they deserve for giving, and philanthropists will do well to give others an example by standing out rather than staying anonymous. Of course, whether one stays anonymous or stands out should be a personal choice and should strictly be the prerogative of the donors themselves.

Information that Philanthropists Should Have

In order to achieve the greatest bang for the buck that philanthropists give, it is important that they know where their donations go to and how the money is spent. This way the donations will stand a better chance of producing the highest values. The government has responsibility in ensuring that receivers of donations provide as much as possible about how they use the money received and what are the results.

Giving to Alleviate Poverty or Support Education?

Unfortunately, giving can never alleviate poverty noticeably. Even giving to support education may not alleviate poverty, because what creates poverty is often not the lack of education but the super-abundance of labor. Supporting education can reduce illiteracy and help build a caring society, and while education may help a particular person get a better job, it may not help everybody get a better job. We have just learnt that in China, where the number of university graduate has almost doubled in the past 5 years, university graduates are having a hard time finding a job. The Businessweek just reported a story to the effect that a Ph.D. from the

best agricultural university in China had difficulty landing a job that pays \$750 a month. That is why funding poverty research to improve our understanding of how to tackle poverty problems is at least as important as donating to the poor.

There is little doubt that giving to support education is for a very good cause and highly commendable, but promoting education is far from being an effective way of alleviating poverty. If education is of the right quality, it will make a people happier notwithstanding a relatively low income, and it will make a safer and better knit community. It will reduce waste. In particular, education may allow people to acquire "mental goods" with much less resources. Kenneth Galbraith in his early book *The Affluent Society* explained how unnecessary consumption is generated as people engage in the rat race.

Giving to Brokers or Direct Beneficiaries

There are many NGOs that act as brokers who are the intermediary between the philanthropists and the beneficiaries of the giving. It is important that these brokers' books and activities are transparent. But today it has been revealed that a number of these NGOs actually consume a large chunk of the donations before the rest is given to the beneficiaries. The government is the only authority that can make sure that these NGOs are honest.

For potential philanthropists there is always the question of whether they should give to agencies such as the Community Chest, or agencies working on behalf of clients as opposed to giving directly to those who stand to benefit. There is the risk that some of the agencies may not be honest and may profiteer from donations. Thus there is a case for having all charities properly audited and regulated in order to minimize chances of embezzlement. We certainly need more transparency about the collection and the disposal of funds.

Reference: "The Richest 400 People in America," Forbes Special Issue, October 11, 2004.

Moving Corporate Citizenship into the Mainstream

Yuk-lan Wong and Robin Stanley Snell
Department of Management

摘要

本文旨在研究公司企業在 21 世紀所面臨的“企業公民”問題的挑戰。本文為“企業公民”提供了清楚的界定，詳述了商界管理人員以及“企業公民”的倡導者對這一概念的不同看法。本文亦解釋了公司企業須要提倡“企業公民”的原因：這一概念不僅有利於增強全球化與經濟發展之間的關係、有助於解決社會和環境危機，還能幫助我們規範遊戲規則，把我們從不正當的競爭中解脫出來。我們陳述了“企業公民”怎樣成為企業管理人員關心的問題，亦分析了公司企業越來越重視這一概念的原因。本文還對公司企業怎樣適應“企業公民”的發展，以及公司企業在這一方面所作的努力進行了研究，也闡述了其不令人滿意之處。最後，我們就“企業公民”的本質及其對公司企業的潛在意義作了討論並就如何成為真正的“企業公民”提出了建議。

Among the many issues facing the corporate world in the 21st century, we see corporate citizenship and business ethics as top of the list in terms of urgency and scale of potential impact. Corporate citizenship represents the concept that companies have obligations to its broader society beyond their singular responsibility to maximize shareholder returns. This view challenges corporations to shoulder their responsibility for the betterment of society through ethically sound and sustainable economic, social, political, and ecological practices.

While the idea of corporate citizenship has a long history, the dominant view among business leaders and even some business students, may still be the one championed by Milton Friedman, that ‘the business of business is business,’ and that ‘corporate social responsibility is a fundamentally irresponsible doctrine’. This view has resonated among business executives and economists alike, who remain convinced that the notions of corporate citizenship are remote from day-to-day business

realities and constitute at best a distraction and at worst an intolerable burden that detracts from the real job of maximizing shareholder returns. It is unlikely that economic pragmatists could be swayed by research on the link between corporate citizenship performance and profitability, for such research remains inconclusive. So is it worth trying to persuade the business sector to embrace corporate citizenship? The answer, in our opinion, is a resounding yes.

One reason for this is that corporate influence on broader society, and indeed every aspect of our lives, has been amplified by globalization. Some corporate giants have sales volumes exceeding the annual GDP of some of the economies that they operate in.

A related reason is that relationships between business and broader society are becoming increasingly interdependent. The awesome technological innovations of the past century have given rise to hitherto unimaginable risks, such as the use of nuclear weaponry, and the prospect of bio-terrorism. The by-products of industrialization include proliferation of waste, depletion of energy and other natural resources, and disturbance to various ecological systems, manifest as global warming, soil erosion, and other horrors. The impact is not confined to physical risks. Social risks have also increased. The corporate world is harnessed to broader society as targets of terrorism, as we saw in 911, and there is a danger that they will sink together. People who are under pressure to go the extra mile at work lack sufficient time or energy to meet the social needs of their families. Burnt-out employees are vulnerable to social and psychological problems such as alcoholism, and violence, both at home and in the workplace. The narrowly defined business of business remains subject to relentless increases in competitive pressures, as trends towards globalization and deregulation continue. Whether in pursuit of competitive advantage, unbounded corporate ambition, or merely survival, workplaces around the globe are becoming colonies of the value-empire of aggression, exploitation, greed, and obsession with grabbing or holding onto a slice of an ever-shrinking supply of public goods. The Utopia envisaged by some economists has become a nightmare. Some big corporate players have come to regard this as a game that few can excel at by keeping to the rules, and some have chosen to cheat, as evident in the recent wave of international corporate misgovernance scandals and the resulting

crisis of confidence. People no longer trust the corporations they work for, buy from, or invest in.

A third reason is that most of us face the choice of either participating in corporate life, or opting out of society altogether. Few people are in a position to live the good life on the land or the sea. Most can't afford to opt out, however angry or disillusioned they are with corporate games.

The general public is becoming increasingly aware of these emerging crises, and of the inter-dependence of business, society and the physical environment, and in increasing numbers are supporting movements that call for corporate citizenship. For some consumers, these issues have become every bit as important as traditional concerns such as quality, reliability and price. Some politicians have urged the corporate world to re-examine business fundamentals, and to respect the rights of all their stakeholders and not just their shareholders by focusing on building a better society. Increasingly rigorous examination by international NGOs of labour conditions and sustainability practices has raised the bar for corporations who wish to maintain their social license to operate. Societies' expectations of the corporate world have correspondingly increased. Companies that fail to clear the bar face the prospect of boycotts, sabotage, lawsuits and even prohibition.

The example of Coca-Cola in India is instructive of how corporate giants may be shooting each other in the foot. Coca-Cola has faced strong protests from local communities around its bottling operations, who claim that these plants are 'sucking' in water, causing shortages among the general public, and are polluting what little water remains. Worse still, there were allegations that company had carelessly poisoned its customers, by distributing bottled coke that contains dangerously high concentrations of agricultural chemicals. Where did those toxins come from? Fingers have pointed at Dow Chemicals for aggressively marketing a pesticide in India that was banned in the West. Some commentators called on the Indian government to outlaw 'Toxic Cola', and the company faces an uphill public relations restoration battle. Corporate citizenship is not just a matter of companies needing to clean up their act in the developing countries, where for all too long they have exploited lax safety regulations and bribed local bureaucrats to give them priority over the needs of local communities. Companies in the advanced economies also need to reframe their entire business

model, and for some of them it may already be too late. For example, McDonald's can no longer bank on super-sizing its profits in tandem with the super-sizing of its customers. We see the company now facing a major crisis. Its efforts to engage in corporate social responsibility, however well meant, involve little more than writing random cheques. Corporate citizenship in our view would entail root and branch transformation. Therein lies the crisis, for McDonald's identity is built around Fries and Big Macs.

The compelling case for corporate citizenship is the increasing public perception that corporations have led us to the brink, and that it is their moral responsibility to work together with the rest of society to turn around the disastrous report card on social, ecological and geo-political issues. The essence of corporate citizenship is accepting this moral responsibility, committing to making positive contributions to the development of broader society and the preservation of the ecological environment.

There are signs that corporate citizenship is becoming a mainstream issue for business leaders and executives. For example, in Hong Kong on November 23rd, 2004, the SCMP published a pull-out feature on corporate social responsibility. However, what corporate citizenship entails in terms of actual policies and practices will, we think, be the subject of an ongoing debate that has barely begun.

We have come across corporate executives who are beginning to care, to some limited extent, about stakeholder concerns, by engaging in philanthropy. Our impression, however, is that the Friedmanite business model is still paramount in their minds, and that they regard such extra curricular activity from an instrumental point of view as a long term investment that will pay back returns in terms of goodwill and improved corporate image. The altruistic business executive, who commits, out of heartfelt duty and principle, to caring for the needs of the various stakeholders, however powerless they are, appears to be a rarity. Yet we think that without this mentality, corporate citizenship will be little more than lip-service.

All too often, companies that are self-styled seekers of improvements in the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental responsibility keep their eyes narrowly focused on the economic hurdle, and fall short of expectations on the other two. Few have integrated and embedded corporate

citizenship into their business models. Some environmental advocacy groups have complained about the practice of greenwashing, where companies allegedly buy environmental credibility through some high-profile public relations activities such as planting trees, while continuing with everyday operations that involve environmentally unsustainable practices.

In our opinion, the business model of true corporate citizens would be permeated with concern for social development and environmental sustainability. ‘Balancing’ the triple bottom line would entail treating these imperatives as co-equals with economic goals, rather than as optional add-ons. It is understandable that corporations would lack know-how in these areas. Therefore they would need to form partnerships with the non-profit sector, where necessary expertise is more likely to reside. A transformation of mindsets from confrontation to collaboration, towards the strategic frontier of shared goals, would make this possible.

We expect corporations to honor their obligations in a spirit of honesty and fairness. It would be to everyone’s benefit for them to do so.

**Call for Paper:
An International Interdisciplinary
Conference on “Progress, Happiness,
and Public Policy”**

Organizing Committee : Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lingnan University (Members to be confirmed)

Editors: Yew Kwang Ng (Monash University) and Lok Sang Ho (Lingnan University)

Date: June 24 and 25, 2005 (Friday and Saturday)

Venue: Lingnan University

Funding : IHSS, CPPS and Centaline Charity Foundation

Motivation:

Humanity has progressed a lot materially, but it is not clear if people are happier than their forefathers. Technological progress means that we have broken many former physical barriers, and our power in terms of making an impact on the natural environment and the ecological system is huge and unprecedented. Under the forces of globalization and competition, for example, in Indonesia deforestation is going on at the rate of the size of 300 soccer fields per hour. It is time we take stock of what we have achieved, where we are heading, and what we can do to procure a better future for humanity. The

proposed conference and book to be published will consist of the following three main themes:

- *What is progress? How happy are people today cf. their ancestors?*
- *What make people happy?*
- *What role may policy play to enhance happiness*

It is hoped that this multidisciplinary conference will bring philosophers, historians, political scientists, economists, sociologists, psychologists, religious leaders, social workers, health workers, etc. together in an exchange of ideas about the meaning of progress and where humanity is heading in terms of happiness.

Please consider the following and let us know where your contribution may fit in. Send your abstract to us at ihss@Ln.edu.hk

**Progress, Happiness, and Public Policy
A Volume to be edited by
Yew Kwang NG and Lok Sang HO**

Introduction to the Volume (to be written by the Editors)

Part I: The Fundamental Questions:

- What is the meaning of happiness?
- Is promoting happiness an objective of public policy or is it entirely a private matter?
- Is it the same as, or is it related, to “utility”
- Is happiness important? Are there other things more important?
- Can happiness be measured?
- What is the meaning of progress?
- Can progress be measured?
- Does competition bring about progress?
- How are we doing in terms of happiness and progress compared to our ancestors?
- What do philosophers say? Is there an evolution in the main stream view, if there is such? How do we interpret the changes in views over the course of history?

Part II: The Determinants of Happiness/Unhappiness

- Relationship between wealth and happiness
- Relationship between health and happiness
- Happiness over the life cycle: is happiness related to the stage of the life cycle
- Relationship between happiness and family life: rearing children, caring for the sick and the old, having time together; marriage and divorce

- Is happiness determined by relative “achievements” and relative consumption rather than absolute levels of achievements and absolute levels of consumption? If this is so for some people, can this be changed? Why is it different for other people?
- Happiness and the occupations; suicide rates among different occupations
- Material goods and material bads versus “mental goods”(such as a sense of achievement and self worth) and “mental bads”(such as a sense of loss and a lack of self esteem)
- What kind of activities make people happy? Philanthropy, religion, work, pleasure seeking activities, etc.
- What is the role of competition?
- What is the role of culture? the media? social psychology?
- The role of a purpose: purposes that can by definition be achieved by some versus purposes that can be achieved by all

Part III: The Role of Public Policy and Institutions

- Is capitalism contributing to happiness?
- Does formal democracy(universal suffrage and party politics) make people happy?
- What kind of democratic institutions(such as freedom of the press and a liberal constitution that protects human rights) may make people happy?
- Can education make people happy? How may education make people happy?
- The role of social safety nets/insurance mechanisms
- The role of redistributive policies
- The role of law and public order and perceived fairness/justice
- The role of globalization

Conclusions(to be written by the editors)

Appendix: **Happiness Research – some links**

- Ng, Yew-kwang(2002) The East-Asian Happiness Gap : Speculating on Causes and Implications.
<http://fol.math.sdu.edu.cn/tyx/content/content.php?id=99&tb=wlg>
- [Paul Krugman on "Pursuing Happiness" and happiness research](#)
- [World Database of Happiness](#), from the Erasmus University of Amsterdam.
- ["Honor Versus Hedonism: A Cross-cultural Analysis of the 'Missing Link' Between Income and](#)

[Subjective Well-being](#)". Paper abstract from University of Michigan.

- [Observer UK story: Martin Seligman and "Authentic Happiness"](#).
- [Dr. Seligman's web site](#).
- [Book review: *The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse*, by Gregg Easterbrook](#).
- [*The Progress Paradox* at Amazon.com](#).
- [TCS Article:Richard Layard - Income and Happiness](#).
- [A page on Dr. Layard with links to .pdf versions of his lectures](#).
- [Article: Daniel Gilbert and Affective Forecasting](#).
- [Daniel Gilbert's homepage](#)
- [NYT article: Barry Schwartz on "maximizing" and "satisficing"](#).
- [Barry Schwartz. "The Tyranny of Choice" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*](#).
- [Schwartz's book *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*](#).
- John McCarthy's page <http://www-formal.stanford.edu/jmc/>

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Please send any feedback to David Ji at jyx@ln.edu.hk.

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