

### **Question 3:**

**The HKDSE is an examination to test the academic ability of Hong Kong students. For many students, this is the main criteria for them to gain admission onto a university course.**

**Write an essay on the pros and cons of the HKDSE examination system and whether universities should also use other assessment criteria for university entrance requirements.**

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What do you think about the examination system in Hong Kong? Predictably, if asked this question, most local students would give responses such as "very bad" or "stressful ". With the negative impression, drawbacks of the HKDSE examination system can be easily named. Despite, it has advantages that cannot be overlooked.

#### **Pros and Cons of HKDSE Examination System**

To commence with, there are negative influences on students' whole person development. Under the current examination system, the teaching pace at school is rather fast. The more time reserved for teenagers to learn, the better preparation they can make for the HKDSE. Regrettably, students tend to devote all their attention to studies and neglect other aspects of development, namely interests, generic skills and interpersonal relationships. It is foreseeable that their relationship with friends and families would be damaged if they are so academically driven. With worsened social connections, their individual development progress would be further hindered.

Another conspicuous disadvantage of the HKDSE examination system encourages rote learning. As a matter of fact, the curriculum of each subject is broad. In order to get remarkable results in the HKDSE and enter a prestigious university, many students resort to rote learning. The ancient Chinese imperial examination system has a similar defect. Aiming to discover talents to be government officials, candidates were required to study "Six Arts" and "Five studies", which is a very broad scope of exam. To succeed in such an exam, memorizing the extensive knowledge without genuine understanding seemed to be unavoidable. Imagine when people who learn by rote are appointed as government officials, their knowledge cannot be applied in their work and provide quality service to the public. To conclude, the HKDSE, similar to the Chinese imperial exam, would have adverse impacts on students' learning attitude and even the future development of society.

Besides, it has potential risks to students' mental and physical health. With a wide curriculum but limited time, students are virtually forced to study day and night. In some extreme cases, they will forget their meals or reserve most of the sleeping hours for revision. Not only do they have low study efficiency, but also health problems like eye strain, migraine and indigestion. In addition, they will have less time to exercise and adopt a sedentary lifestyle. Soon, they will be prone to illnesses, for example, obesity, varicose vein and osteoporosis. Furthermore, it is commonly known that students and parents perceive obtaining a university place the only way for a promising future. As a result, before taking the DSE exam, some may suffer from mental illnesses like insomnia or physical problems like stomachache and headache.

Despite the flaws, it has its advantages, which are as follows.

Thanks to the HKDSE examination system, more talents are discovered every year. Students with outstanding performance in every subject. Those who can outperform others under the strict examination system can be proved to be intelligent and competitive. Their logic, critical thinking and ability to work under pressure would help them contribute to society.

In addition, strict arrangement is another key advantage. As we all know, there are standardized measures in all DSE exam venues. The same exam start time, announcement scripts, the surveillance cameras installed in examination venues, to name but a few, are to ensure a fair setting. The on-screen marking of scripts in designated centres is to ensure marking accuracy. All the mentioned arrangements can guarantee a fair examination.

Reviewing the above drawbacks and advantages of the HKDSE, it is noticeable that the system does more harm than good to us. In view of this, it is preferable to think of alternatives.

### **Alternative admission criteria**

There has been a controversy over the criteria for university entrance requirements. Some may vehemently oppose academic criteria as a standard to judge people's eligibility to enter university, while some are in favor of it. Whether it is a good standard or not, we should scrutinize other criteria

Here are two alternatives to academic results of the DSE exam. To commence with, the existing School Nomination Direct Admission Scheme can recognize talented local secondary students with exceptional aptitude in specific disciplines. Regardless of DSE results, the nominees can be granted an opportunity to enter universities. With this flexible scheme, more talents can be discovered to contribute to society by applying their knowledge. Local entrepreneur Stark Chan, once dubbed Son of the Star, is one of the earliest beneficiaries of similar schemes. He is the first student in Hong Kong to be admitted to the HKUST straight after Form 5 because of his distinguished achievement in science.

Apart from the scheme, one's contribution to society is also worth consideration. Alex Fong, a former Olympic medalist and an awardee of Ten Outstanding Young Persons Selection, is a typical example. Representing Hong Kong, he competed in men's 200 m individual medley, men's 400 m individual medley and men's 200 m backstroke at Sydney Olympics in 2000. Fortunately, he eventually broke the Hong Kong record in competition. Also, he has been serving as the ambassador of various charitable organizations. With his contribution to local sports and charities, he was admitted to HKU through Non-JUPAS application. From his experience, it is substantiated that non-academic achievements can be of significant importance for university admission.

After all, it is deeply believed that the HKDSE examination is not the only way for university entrance. Considering solely academic performance would bear the risk of stifling students' potentials. Therefore, revising the examination system will be beneficial for both society and local students.

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