

【Immediate Release】

Survey Reveals Gifted Students' Life under Epidemic

(Hong Kong -12 August 2020) Today, the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education (HKAGE) held an online press conference titled 'Adversity Riders' (PC) to announce the results of a questionnaire survey on the impact of the epidemic on the gifted students and their families. The survey showed that about 42% of parents perceived that their relationship with their children became more harmonious during the class suspension period, but nearly 20% of parents indicated a destructive relationship with their children during the period. A few student members and their parents attended the PC to share their ups and downs during the outbreak.

Professor NG Tai Kai, Executive Director of the HKAGE said, 'During the class suspension from late January to the end of May, the HKAGE tried hard to maintain operations of most programmes to our student members and their parents. In addition, we even organised innovative programmes and activities to address the needs of students. About 80% of the affected programmes could be maintained by moving to online, distance learning and rescheduling during the outbreak.'

He added, 'in the past few months, we have been emphasizing on "social distancing" to fight the virus. Indeed, what we need is "physical distancing" whilst an emotional connection between us shall be maintained to keep our social life. Otherwise, an unhealthy psychological state would be created for children as well as adults.'

Mr WONG Chung Po, Head of Academic Programme Development Division of the HKAGE indicated, 'Although the epidemic has affected our normal operations, it has also brought forth the light of possible new approaches in learning and teaching. In addition to online teaching, "Flipped Classrooms" and the "Guided Extended Learning" will potentially become the new normal shaping the future of education. The former one allows students to review the learning materials at home and then discuss and complete their school works together with their classmates and teachers during the lessons. The latter one encourages students to take initiatives in setting their own study goals and progress whilst the teachers will take a facilitator's role in the process. The HKAGE has applied those techniques into our student programmes over the past few months to promote student engagement and active learning. And this practice will direct the future development of the HKAGE as well.'

Parent Survey Results

To study the impact of the epidemic on gifted students, the HKAGE sent questionnaires to students' parents from the end of June to mid-July. Finally, 362 parents completed the questionnaires. **Dr Eric FUNG**, Head of the HKAGE's Research Division, said, 'Respondents indicated that the impact of the epidemic on them was obvious. Ranging from 1 point for 'no impact' to 10 points for 'very severe impact', the mean score was 6.1 points. The major source of pressure came from "children's academic progress", with a mean score of 6.2 points, followed by "parents' career" and "the health of family members".'

During the school suspension, students needed to study online at home and such practice brought extra parenting time to their families. Over 42% of the parents interviewed said that their parent-child relationship had become more harmonious. Dr Fung continued, 'Parents indicated that the increased communication time helped to enhance mutual understanding and promote their relationship, with a

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mean of 6.8 points. Parents would use the bonus time with their children to cook, buy food, chat, visit bookstores, etc.'

However, the response also showed that about 19% of parents said that their relationship with their children had been deteriorated. The major reason was that their children were addicted to games, with a mean of 6.9, followed by a slack off attitude in the study (6.5 points).

For the students' adaptability to online teaching, from a score of 1 for unadaptable to a score of 10 for well adaptable, the mean was 6.6 points. About 56% of the responded parents pointed out that their children could adapt to the online teaching mode within a week. However, about 6% of parents said that it took more than two months for their children to get used to it. The biggest worries of parents about online teaching were 'unsatisfactory time management' (6.5 points), 'de-concentration on the study' (6.5 points), and 'lack of support on the study' (6.1 points).

The Adversity Riders

Isaac Gai, Form 4 (19/20)

The epidemic has affected every aspect of the life of gifted students. During the class suspension, Isaac, a Form 4 student, was troubled by his inability to adapt to online learning. The situation got worse as time went by. Isaac, a frequent contestant of various kinds of competitions as well as a sports and math enthusiast, lost his former vim and vigour. During the four months of school closure, he failed to turn in his homework again and again. The situation aroused the concern of teachers and parents. Isaac's mother Kitty and Isaac had a discussion about this, and the discussion turned into a fierce argument. Both the mother and son felt helpless. Only until the class resumed, Isaac's life returned to normal and his enthusiasm for learning was rekindled. Though Isaac's learning experience during the epidemic seemed to deem a failure, he would not shy away from online learning. He is currently participating in the online activities provided by the HKAGE and enrolled in more online courses, trying to overcome the challenges of the new normal under the epidemic.

NG Ka Yiu, Form 1 (19/20)

Form 1 student, NG Ka Yiu is one of the successful cases who could cope with online learning in a short period of time. In the early stage of online learning, Ka Yiu encountered numerous technical problems and time management difficulties. With the help of his parent, fortunately, most of the problems were solved. Since then, studying at home meant no difficulties for him. He started to identify a need to fill up his 'bonus' time at home by extending his school courses to personal interests. He set up his YouTube channel to share the knowledge of his favourite science subjects. All things are difficult before they are easy, Ka Kiu started up the channel with the support of his family members, from concept to filming and editing. He is thrilled about the final products.

Ugo LEE, Form 6 (19/20)

For gifted students in senior grades, their concerns would not be on their adaptability to online learning but the impact of the cancellation of public examinations and international competitions. Under the threat of Covid-19, candidate of the current GCE A-level, Ugo LEE faced the cancellation of the examination. To minimise the impact on the candidates, the examination organiser decided to evaluate the students by their school performance. But Ugo is disappointed by this as he believes that only a fair and open examination can reflect the knowledge and understanding that the candidates have attained. The

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epidemic, on the other hand, has its bright side to Ugo. The cancellation of the examination brought him extra time which allowed him to participate in more student activities. As a member of the HKAGE's 'Student Organising Team' (SOT) which planned a series of activities named Chat Club for the student members early this year. The outbreak didn't stop their plan though, the team would rather conduct the series online and meet the challenges of the problematic online activities than giving up on the plan. As a result, the whole team earned some valuable skillset for running online activities.

Edward XU, Form 5 (19/20)

The HKAGE has endeavoured to encourage potential student members to participate in international competitions. Competitions do not just allow student members to unleash their potential, but also provide them the opportunities to gain exposure and compete with prime global players. Some gifted students will also use their brilliant international competition results for the application of prestigious international universities.

The International Physics Olympiad 2020 (IPhO) was Edward XU's first international competition and possibly his last one before university as a Form 5 student. In this regard, he spent more than a year and a lot of effort for the game. In addition to acquiring international experience through the game, he also hoped to obtain ideal results to increase his chances to get admitted to a good university in the future. However, under the epidemic, IPhO was canceled. But Edward's efforts were not in vain. Whilst the HKAGE kept on providing the training to the students, the IPhO instructors kept exploring for new online competitions for the students. Eventually, the European Physics Olympiad was found and Edward won a bronze medal, his first medal from an international competition, after all these ups and downs.

The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education, a subvented non-governmental organisation, was established in 2008. It aims at serving the education sector in Hong Kong, offering high quality information, support and appropriate learning opportunities to gifted students, their parents, teachers and other stakeholders engaged in gifted education. Most of its programmes are provided free-of-charge.

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Appendix

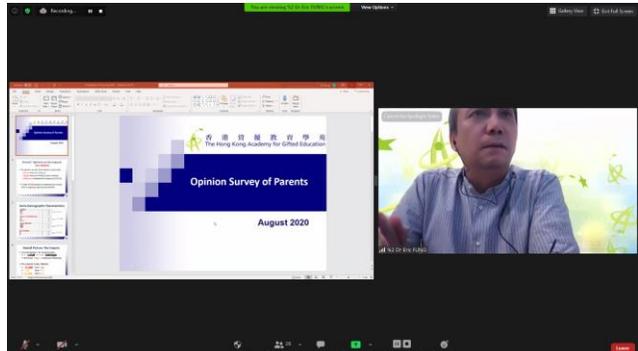
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#1.



#1 Professor NG Tai Kai, Executive Director of the HKAGE

#2.



#2 Dr Eric FUNG, Head of the Research Division, HKAGE

#3.



#3 Mr WONG Chung Po, Head of Academic Programme Development Division, HKAGE



#4.

#4 Ugo LEE, GCE A-Level Candidate

#5



#5 Form 1 student, NG Ka Kiu



#6

#6 Form 4 student, Isaac GAI, and mother

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#7 Form 5 student, Edward XU