

Statement on the social situation pertinent to the Extradition Law Amendment Bill

The mental health of students and different stakeholders in the educational field is a priority for the Division of Educational Psychology (DEP) of the Hong Kong Psychological Society. The DEP urges our members to uphold standards of professional practice to continue providing educational psychology services to students.

The controversies and tensions over the proposal to amend the extradition law have been escalating, especially after the large-scale protest on 9th June 2019. It was observed that some students and teachers were deeply affected and started to exhibit emotional reactions, disrupting the normal operation of schools. The DEP is aware that the recent social unrest might have an impact on our students' psychological development and well-being.

The DEP would like to stress that the work of educational psychologists is not limited to supporting students in their learning, mental health and personal development from a remedial perspective. It is also important to adopt a preventive approach, including giving attention to the support network available to students (such as teachers).

Therefore, in view of the social situation around the Extradition Law amendment bill, the DEP would like to make the following statements and recommendations:

1. To relieve the social unrest as well as its negative impacts on students' and teachers' mental health, the DEP urges the HKSAR government and Legislative Council to postpone the Extradition Law amendment, and seek appropriate alternatives in favour of rational discussion in society.
2. Exposure to clashes ensued during protests may create psychological distress to students and teachers. Therefore, the DEP strongly urges the public and police officers to exercise restraint and conduct, as well as to handle protest activities in a peaceful and gentle manner.
3. Expressing thoughts and feelings in ways that one feels most comfortable with is an important part of emotion and stress management. The DEP suggests schools and school sponsoring bodies to respect and provide their students, teachers and school-based educational psychologists the flexibility to express their opinions and to participate in social activities under safe and feasible circumstances, while adhering to the professional code of conduct.
4. To cater for students' psychological and developmental needs, schools and teachers are recommended to maintain an open and nonjudgmental attitude towards students in discussions of social events. At the same time, do suggest appropriate ways to cope with their emotional reactions.
5. If students and teachers experience any emotional distress, they are encouraged to reach out to either the school-based educational psychologists or other qualified counselors for further assistance.
6. Parents are recommended to spend more time with their children during this time. Through open and rational discussions, parents may help their children ventilate negative emotions and guide them to think rationally.
7. For more guidance on student counselling, please refer to the "Crisis Counseling to Children in Disasters" resource kit on our website.
(<https://www.dep.hkps.org.hk/crisis-counseling-to-children-in-disasters/>)