EDUCATION NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS

The following was provided by Joanne Tse, a GRCC student from Hong Kong regarding her impressions of the differences in teaching and learning expectations between the schools she attended in Hong Kong and here in the US. It is presented in her own words.

“Overall, I would say Hong Kong educational system is formulaic; however, more knowledge intensive, while US educational system is more flexible. Either you take the initiative to study or you don’t.

In order to make the school look more united, almost every school in Hong Kong requires students to wear uniforms, except for universities. Students in Hong Kong are expected to just sit still in their seats, behaving themselves and listening to the teachers quietly. They are expected to listen and memorize what’s in the textbook. People who score high on their exams there are said to be good students. Schools in Hong Kong have more exams throughout an academic year, and students are concerned about their scores very much. Teachers usually grade the exams on a curve so we would know how we are doing in our class, but this makes studying even more competitive. The content in the exams is knowledge intensive and mostly based on the information in the textbook but not applying what you have learned. Students just have to memorize everything in the book to get good grades in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, teachers only read out of the book and give information to the students; they don’t expect students to ask why it is. When one of my friends tried to ask a teacher about something in the textbook, the teacher only told him to just memorize it because that is how it is. Teachers don’t really care if students participate or engage in the class. They only care about how well the students are doing on the exams. We have homework nearly every day, but the homework is usually just asking the information that is in the book. We seldom have presentations, so the education is more like memorizing instead of learning and applying.

That is why I found it hard to adapt when I came to the US and teachers were always asking me to ask questions and engage in the classroom activities. Teachers in the US like students asking them questions to see if students are really learning and processing the information that they just learned. In the US, may teachers like to teach by using activities and making learning more entertaining.”

How do teachers in Hong Kong handle issues of copying, plagiarism, cheating, attendance and other classroom behavior?

Instructors take cheating, copying, and plagiarism very serious. If students are discovered to have engaged in any of those activities several times, they may have to repeat their class level or risk even being kicked out of school. However, not many teachers care about class attendance and other behaviors like students sleeping in class since they expect that students will study on their own and ask questions later if they have problems. Cell phone use is banned in primary and
secondary school, but not at the university level. Eating in class is not allowed, and students in fact must ask instructor permission before even drinking water in class. Students must notify the teach if they need to be excused to leave the classroom for restroom or other breaks.

*Office hours and meeting with teachers outside of class*

Instructors are present at the schools between 8 and 4:30 daily, even if they are not conducting class on that day. Most instructors do not have their own offices; they usually sit and work together in an open area and would meet with students there. Students are expected to speak to teachers in a polite way and never call a teacher by his or her first name. Teachers and students rarely would develop relationships as friends.