

EDUCATION

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From left: students Rita Chow Hiu-ying, Emil Lindblad Kernell, Matthew Ponsford with associate professor Terry Kaan. Photo: Dickson Lee

A dramatic shift in focus

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"The play's the thing - Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."

This famous Shakespearean quote from *Hamlet* suggests that drama has the power to unlock consciences and consciousness.

English drama which was, at one stage, used only rarely in Hong Kong classrooms, has now become a staple of English-language teaching here.

I believe our students' educational foundations, and their personal lives, are all the richer for it.

Personal experience in schools has proved that drama games are the ultimate ice-breakers. Even the shyest student in a Chinese medium of instruction school can respond well to English drama games which combine language with movement.

Pedagogically, such activities provide an opportunity for the fusion of kinesthetic intelligence with linguistic intelligence, as outlined in Howard Gardner's theories of multiple intelligences.

Drama now comprises one of the six or so optional electives selected by each secondary school for the subject of English adopted in the new syllabus. Some schools have adopted drama as their chosen elective. These schools are deftly combining the theoretical and practical aspects of drama to create stimulating English courses for their students. This, in turn, has allowed drama as an elective subject to become an important component of school-based assessment (SBA) programmes in our educational institutions.

However, it is not just drama as an elective subject in its own right which can make good use of dramatic techniques. I have found that for the short stories elective, characterisation in a story is best taught by using dramatic interview techniques.

One student in a group will take on the persona of a given story's main character, and will answer questions from the other students in his/her group.

The brave students who take on the role of the characters find that they have to change their manner of talking, walking and behaving to capture the essence of characters who might be removed from their own personalities.

So each story that my

colleagues and I tackle in class, whether it be a humorous, horrifying or mysterious one, benefits from a dramatic reading and character interpretation.

Over the years, we have found that students have become more adept at reading stories aloud. Central to this process has been the students learning to employ appropriate character voices.

This type of oral exercise has also been shown to lead to gains in the oral English public examinations. In this fashion, drama can spread its benefits to many different areas in the English-language curriculum.

Film, too, is a dramatic medium. Every senior student of English in Hong Kong secondary schools is required to complete SBA tasks on what is called non-print fiction. This is really an alternative term for film studies.

Many students, furthermore, are obliged to grapple with weighty English "dramedies", which are interesting blends of drama with comedy like as 2000's *Billy Elliot*. Students learn that the crux of drama is conflict.

In *Billy Elliot*, the father

Every senior student of English in Hong Kong secondary schools is required to complete SBA tasks on non-print fiction

memorably screams out "Boys don't do ballet, Billy. They play football or they box or they do wrestling..." As a result, a generation of Hong Kong students have been exposed to the vicissitudes of Northern European gender-based chauvinism.

Hong Kong students understand this dramatic conflict at a deep and fundamental level because drama is a universal language which crosses all cultural boundaries.

Perry Bayer is secretary of the Native-English Speaking Teachers' Association (Nesta)



Students from St Paul's Convent School in Causeway Bay rehearse a Shakespeare play. Photo: Nora Tam

Live or let die

Advances in medicine bring ethical questions to the fore in courses offered to law and medical students, writes Mabel Sieh

Chan Tsz-chung was enlightened by the class discussion about life and death because it was the first time he had touched on such a topic. "We do not often discuss this in Chinese society. It's the first time I've discussed it intellectually," says the 23-year-old.

Rita Chow Hiu-ying, 22, enjoyed the discussion as much as Chan did. "The class entirely changed my understanding of death. I began to realise the gap between the legal and medical profession and society about this concept," she says.

"The euthanasia discussion was of interest because we were able to ask challenging questions," says Matthew Ponsford, 26, an exchange student from the University of Ottawa.

"How can we refuse a request to die from a competent person and give no autonomy to the patient, and yet give someone who is incompetent to make the decision permission to die?" asks Ponsford.

"This can happen when patient has given prior medical directives, or the physicians believe it is in the best interest of the patient to end his life. These kinds of ethical dilemmas are never straightforward," he says.

All three are law students taking the medico-legal issues course at the University of Hong Kong. The curriculum has been offered by the faculty of law since 1996.

Students learn about biomedical ethics and issues about medical law, and study controversial topics such as euthanasia, abortion, human organ transplants and genetic testing.

Such deep reflections by

students are precisely what Terry Kaan Sheung-hung wants to achieve in his class. "Life is never simple," says Kaan, co-director of the Centre for Medical Ethics and Law in the faculties of law and medicine.

"When does life begin and when does it end? These questions have implications about how we deal with topics like euthanasia and abortion in real life. We look at the cases and debates around the world, and how moral issues and related legislation have evolved.

"As a facilitator, I don't tell them what to do. I want them to learn to figure out the answers themselves while accommodating any new developments in the field," says Kaan.

Before coming to Hong Kong, Kaan was an advocate and solicitor in Singapore.

He has served as a member of the Singapore National Medical Ethics Committee and Bioethics Advisory Committee of the Singapore Ministry of Health.

The controversy about ethical issues arises because there are conflicting ideas, Kaan says. "We are often faced with two fundamental values: defending life and preserving human dignity. When the two clash, what to do is not a simple question any more."

Kaan's students are convinced that such courses help them to prepare for their future careers. "It helps me understand the dilemmas facing our society. The cases we discuss allow me to see how the law and the medical profession interact with each other," says Chan.

"The course is very useful for the legal profession and produces transferable skills to many other areas, such as public policy and social development," says Ponsford.

"In law, we are challenged to reconcile strong moral and ethical beliefs with rules, legislation and laws. We are constantly challenged to strike a balance between the wider

societal interest and personal autonomy," he says.

Emil Kernell, an exchange student from Sweden, thinks the benefits of the course go beyond preparing for a career. "I think it is important for every person to develop and improve their analytical sense concerning ethics, morals and the law. The university not only has a role to produce a group of lawyers every year; it also needs to ensure the graduates will be doing something good for the society," Kernell says.

Chow agrees: "A course in

Without ethics, the world will get scary. So we need to train our students

FOK TAI-FAI (LEFT), CHINESE UNIVERSITY PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR

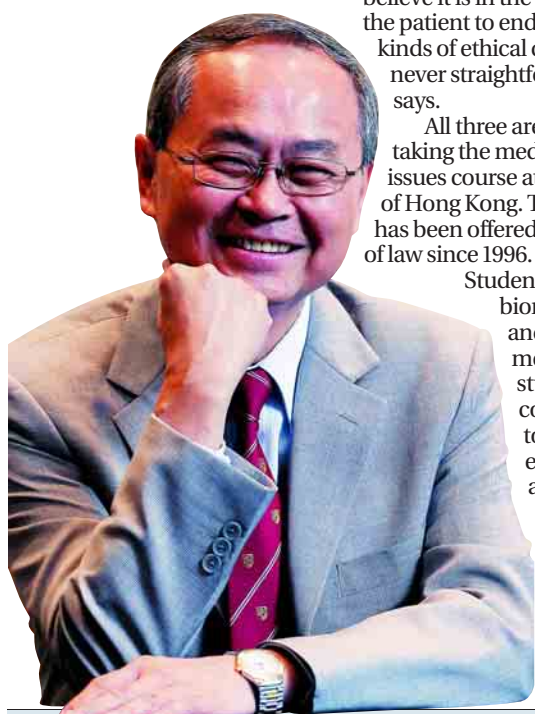
ethics teaches me how to become a better lawyer, and a humane lawyer."

Kaan has noticed changes in the medical research field over the past few decades. "There is the case of dealing with patients' records and tissue samples, for example. Now that we have electronic records, which can be shared around the world for research purposes, how should we handle privacy, or get patients' consent for using their data?"

Chinese University's pro-vice-chancellor Fok Tai-fai shares Kaan's concerns. Fok is the interim director of the newly launched Centre for Bioethics in the faculty of medicine.

From January, the centre will offer ethics courses to all medical students.

"Technology has brought a lot more ethical issues to light. Technology can be an angel when used wisely and ethically,



NEWS

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Spaniards told to hang up

Smartphones and similar devices have been banned in schools in Castilla-La Mancha, Spain, following teachers' complaints of constant interruptions in class, and concerns about the use of phones to cheat, *The Guardian* reported.

A new regional law gives legal backing to rules that schools have had in place for years. Now any pupils caught sneaking their phones into class will face losing their break-time privileges or, in the case of repeat offenders, detention.

In 2014, an Ipsos poll found that 94 per cent of Spaniards between 16 and 35 years old had a mobile, with 56 per cent of students admitting to using their phone during class hours.



The Colossus of Rhodes

University of Hong Kong graduate Geoffrey Yeung Ka-wei has been awarded the Rhodes Scholarship, whose past awardees include US president Bill Clinton and Pulitzer Prize-winner Siddhartha Mukherjee. Yeung is studying for a postgraduate certificate in Laws, after graduating with a double degree in business administration and law. He plans to study civil law at the University of Oxford.

A recognition of outstanding leadership qualities and commitment to service as well as intellect, the Rhodes Scholarship was established in 1902 to bring the most talented students from around the world to pursue postgraduate study at the University of Oxford. Each year, one Rhodes Scholar from Hong Kong is selected to join 82 other Rhodes Scholars from around the world.

Applications are accepted between June and September every year. Candidates must be aged between 19 to 25, and residents who have received, at least five of the last 10 years of education in Hong Kong, or mainland students enrolled in a university in Hong Kong for full-time study.

All that jazz

More than 40 of Hong Kong's finest jazz musicians will be featured at the second Hong Kong Jazz Family Fest 2015 to raise funds for Jockey Club Sarah Roe School, the English Schools Foundation school for students who have special educational needs.

The event will be held on January 16 and 17 from 8.30pm to midnight at Grappa's Cellar in Central. Tickets are available online at www.hodfords.com/online_ticketing/jazzfamily2015/buy.php.



Ted Lo (right) will play at the Jazz Family Festival 2015 in aid of students with special needs. Photo: Mike Kennedy

Ways to improve an accent British Council IELTS has launched the 1001 Ways mobile application available on both the App Store and Google Play to expose users to English accents around the world.

Besides guessing the accents of inhabitants of different regions of the world, users can also record and share their own accents to be part of a quiz.

Commonly required for university admissions, the IELTS test takes candidates' different accents into account and, in its listening tests, offers audio materials that illustrate the diversity of the ways English is spoken.