

The Case For Animal Protection Curricula in Schools in Hong Kong

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Abstract

In a city like Hong Kong where animal protection laws replicate outdated British legislation from the early 1900s, extensive educational measures must be taken to raise students' collective awareness of animal welfare and rights, in order to meet the pressing environmental, social, and moral demands of a rapidly developing society. This article argues that the study of animal protection in Hong Kong school curricula is essential to raising future generations of responsible and empathetic community leaders and members. Not only can such curricula encourage students to make well-informed, healthy, and environmentally-conscious choices as consumers, it also challenges the speciesist "hidden curricula" perpetuated in schools, developing students' critical and independent thinking skills and empowering them to regain ownership over and accountability for their decisions. It instils empathy in students towards animals, as well as vulnerable groups in society that share a similar narrative of oppression and exploitation, such as women and ethnic minorities. This article refutes the critique of animal protection curricula being a form of indoctrination by challenging the notion that any education system can be truly value-free.

Keywords: Animal law; animal protection curricula; humane education; speciesism; Hong Kong school curricula

Introduction

The study of animal protection in Hong Kong school curricula is crucial to ensure students receive an education which gives them the moral and intellectual tools to challenge their assumptions, partake in active citizenship and democratic action, take ownership over their everyday choices, and maximise their physical, mental, and moral wellbeing. It targets the inadequate state of animal protection education in the status quo, which legitimises the objectification of animals and ignores the systemic, institutionalised violence towards them, as evidenced through the consumption of animal products in school catering outlets and experimentation on animal bodies in school laboratories.¹ Not only does the current state of education jeopardise students' physical wellbeing, as their bodily health may be partially compromised by the excessive consumption of meat, eggs, and dairy products², it also harms students' mental and moral wellbeing by nurturing a reductionist view of other species and emotionally desensitising students to harm-inflicting and violent behaviour from a young age.³ For the present purposes, animal protection is interpreted broadly to mean protection of animal welfare, that is guaranteeing an animal's physical and psychological wellbeing from their point of view.⁴ It would encompass all interspecies educational activities at any level of schooling that strive to protect animal welfare and promote animal rights.

Why Hong Kong?: The Significance of Hong Kong

Dire Shortcomings of Hong Kong's Animal Protection School Curricula

As primary providers of education, schools in Hong Kong are a crucial part of a societal order that wield the ability to promote ethical, sustainable development and improve the capacity of students to address animal, environmental, and development issues.⁵ However, schools are currently

¹ Helen Pederson, 'Schools, Speciesism, and Hidden Curricula: The Role of Critical Pedagogy for Humane Education Futures' (2004) 8 *Journal of Futures Studies* 1, 2.

² Julie Andrzejewski, Marta P. Baltodano, and Linda Symcox (eds), *Social Justice, Peace and Environmental Education: Transformative Standards* (Routledge 2009) 138.

³ Pederson (n 1).

⁴ SPCA, 'What is Animal Welfare?' (SPCA, 2019) <<https://www.sPCA.org.hk/en/animal-welfare/what-is-animal-welfare>> accessed 30 May 2019.

⁵ Richard Kahn, 'Towards Ecopedagogy: Weaving a Broad-based Pedagogy of Liberation for Animals, Nature, and the Oppressed People of the Earth' (2003) 1 *Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy Journal* 26, 32.

institutions where the objectification of animals is socially acceptable; they are breeding grounds where routine violence towards animals takes place in an organised, deliberate form.⁶ Although evidence continues to show that human wellbeing is interdependent with animal and environmental wellbeing, school curricula in Hong Kong tend to justify human maltreatment of animals in line with aspects of Western science⁷, and therefore continue to engender a speciesist “hidden curricula”⁸ which espouses “a prejudice or bias in favour of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species”⁹. Students learn in an environment which views animals only for their instrumental value, rather than intrinsic worth. This in turn legitimises human-animal domination structures, sustaining students’ misguided, singular worldview of animal abuse and objectification as “normal, natural, or inevitable”.¹⁰ Thus, students continue to treat animals as cheap commodities, inexhaustible production units, renewable natural resources, and research experimentation subjects for human diseases, even after they have graduated from school, but rarely unique and sentient individual beings in and of themselves.¹¹

School curricula in Hong Kong are obliged to follow the Hong Kong Government Centre for Health Protection’s “Healthy Eating Food Pyramid”. This Food Pyramid mandates that children aged 2-5¹², 6-11¹³, and 12-17 should eat “meat, fish, egg, and alternatives” to maintain a healthy diet, thereby indoctrinating children with a false narrative that meat, eggs, and dairy are a necessity for adequate protein.¹⁴ Although the EatSmart@school.hk Campaign - a healthy eating program for primary schools - is supposed to provide suitable meat alternatives in vegetarian school lunches¹⁵, the Student Health Service discourages a vegetarian diet through misinformation and

⁶ Pederson (n 1).

⁷ Andrzejewski, Baltodano, and Symcox (n 2) 137.

⁸ Pederson (n 1) 6.

⁹ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (Avon Books 1975) 7.

¹⁰ Pederson (n 1).

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Centre for Health Protection, ‘Health Eating Food Pyramid for Children: 2-5 years old’ (*Department of Health*, 2018) <https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/her/exn_nutp_027bp.pdf> accessed 30 May 2019.

¹³ Centre for Health Protection, ‘Health Eating Food Pyramid for Children: 6-11 years old’ (*Department of Health*, 2018) <https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/her/exn_nutp_028bp.pdf> accessed 30 May 2019.

¹⁴ Centre for Health Protection, ‘Health Eating Food Pyramid for Adolescents: 12-17 years old’ (*Department of Health*, 2018) <https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/her/exn_nutp_029bp.pdf> accessed 30 May 2019.

¹⁵ Centre for Health Protection, ‘Nutritional Guidelines on Lunch for Students: For Use in Primary and Secondary Schools’ (*Department of Health*, June 2017) <https://school.eatsmart.gov.hk/files/pdf/lunch_guidelines_bi.pdf> accessed 30 May 2019.

fear-mongering.¹⁶ Its “Health information” explains what a vegetarian diet is and states that it has become more popular due to health-conscious eating, religious reasons, and “special beliefs such as environmental protection and animal rights protection”. It claims that a vegetarian diet can cause nutrient deficiency, malnutrition, tiredness, and anaemia, since “some nutrients are only found in meat, eggs, and dairy products”. Bizarrely, it mentions that vegetarian food “[does] not have a strong taste and is not particularly appetizing”. Although it is unclear whether the aforementioned Government Departments have based their health information on sound evidence, given that no scientific studies are cited, it is possible to surmise that vested interests of animal product companies may influence its policies so as to ensure the pro-meat, pro-dairy propaganda continues, although there has been no evidence of this yet.¹⁷ What is certain is that the Hong Kong government and its schools purposefully omit the human, animal, and environmental costs of eating meat, eggs, and dairy products.¹⁸ Extensive scientific research has proven that meat, eggs, and dairy products contribute to cancer, cardiovascular disease, heart disease, and diabetes.¹⁹ Specifically, the World Health Organization classifies red meat in Group 2A (probable carcinogens) and processed meat in Group 1 (carcinogenic to humans).²⁰

While this scientific evidence provides a sound anthropocentric basis for avoiding, or at least minimising, animal product consumption for the sake of human health, it masks the moral and environmental arguments for adopting a plant-based diet. Singer convincingly makes the moral argument that the purposeful exclusion of animals from the moral circle does not give equal consideration to their capacity to suffer, in the same way as humans have the capacity to suffer.²¹ With regards to the environment, animal agriculture causes deforestation and desertification as forests are cut down and land is shifted from growing food crops to feeding animals, and it also contributes directly to global warming through animals’ methane emissions.²² Given that the UN

¹⁶ Student Health Service, ‘Health Information: Diet & Nutrition’ (*Department of Health*, 2014 <https://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/english/health/health_dn/health_dn_vdn.html> accessed 30 May 2019.

¹⁷ OpenSecrets.org, ‘Dairy’ (*Center for Responsive Politics*, 2019) <<https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?ind=A04++>> accessed 30 May 2019.

¹⁸ Andrzejewski, Baltodano, and Symcox (n 2).

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ World Health Organization, ‘Q&A on the carcinogenicity of the consumption of red meat and processed meat’ (*WHO*, October 2015) <<https://www.who.int/features/qa/cancer-red-meat/en/>> accessed 30 May 2019.

²¹ Peter Singer, ‘Speciesism and Moral Status’ (2009) 40 *Metaphilosophy* 3-4, 572.

²² Andrzejewski, Baltodano, and Symcox (n 2).

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that humans only have 12 years to limit climate change, and global warming beyond 1.5°C would significantly worsen the risks of extreme heat, floods, drought, and poverty for hundreds of millions of people, animal agriculture becomes a dire threat to animal and human species alike.²³

Despite these findings, Hong Kong schools - in the same way as schools in other countries including the United Kingdom and United States - continue to endorse the habitual and unconscious consumption of animal products, skirting their responsibility to equip students with the knowledge to make well-informed, conscious choices as consumers and citizens who will face the impacts of climate change in their lifetime. Under the existing paradigm, not only are schools threatening students' physical wellbeing as a result of a lack of animal protection education in school curricula, students are also unable to decide for themselves whether they want to opt-out of an entrenched system of animal oppression and environmental destruction. They cannot identify whether these cruel and unsustainable behaviours are congruent with their espoused values, as they take speciesism and the division between man and animal as a given social construct. Their lack of knowledge allows ethical gerrymandering to thrive.²⁴ In the long-term, schools are encouraging the continuance of anthropocentrism behaviour which contributes to the worsening of climate change. This type of irresponsible education has led Hong Kong people on average to eat 664 grams of meat per day, which is more than three times the daily recommended amount of meat²⁵; in fact, it is primarily meat consumption that has led Hong Kong to become the seventh highest emitter per capita in the world²⁶, especially given that 90% of Hong Kong's total food supply is imported, with 94% of fresh pork and 100% of fresh beef imported from Mainland China.²⁷

²³ Jonathan Watts, 'We have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe, warns UN' (*The Guardian*, 8 October 2018) <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/global-warming-must-not-exceed-15c-warns-landmark-un-report>> accessed 31 May 2019.

²⁴ Lori Marino, 'Ethical Gerrymandering in Science'(2011) 1 *Journal of Animal Ethics* 2, 119.

²⁵ Emily Tsang, 'Why Hong Kong's love affair with meat is leaving planet paying price through carbon emissions' (*South China Morning Post*, 9 June 2018) <<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/2149793/why-hong-kongs-love-affair-meat-leaving-planet>> accessed 13 August 2019; Y. Y. Yau, B. Thibodeau, and C. Not, 'Impact of cutting meat intake on hidden greenhouse gas emissions in an import-reliant city' (2018) 13 *Environmental Research Letters* 6.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Food and Health Bureau, 'Frequently Asked Questions on Food Supply of Hong Kong' (*The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*, 11 March 2018) <https://www.fhb.gov.hk/download/press_and_publications/otherinfo/110318_food_supply_faq/e_food_supply_faq.pdf> accessed 24 August 2019.

Untapped Potential of Animal Protection Curricula in Hong Kong's Future

Although the status quo is far from ideal, there is great potential for animal protection curricula in schools to alleviate the problems canvassed above. Hong Kong is uniquely positioned for the introduction of animal protection curricula, as its animal welfare laws are in the midst of development. A three-month public consultation launched by the Hong Kong Agriculture, Fisheries, and Conservation Department was running until mid-July of 2019, and new animal welfare laws aiming to introduce the legal concept of a duty of care to animals are expected to come into force in 2021.²⁸ During this renewal of Hong Kong society's commitment to animals, students have the potential to be agents in the evolution of a complete reform of Hong Kong animal protection laws.²⁹ However, in order to do so, they must have the knowledge and skills to advocate for change, which is the gap that animal protection curricula aims to fill.

Moreover, Hong Kong is advantaged by its transnational, cross-cultural elements of thinking. It prides itself on being a bridge between Eastern and Western cultures, as a result of its Chinese roots and colonial history.³⁰ Students in Hong Kong are well-positioned to question why it is legitimate in most Western countries to eat pigs, while Hong Kong citizens are banned from dog and cat meat.³¹ Such analysis encourages Hong Kong students to think critically about whether animal protection laws should be adapted to fit the local context, and if so, how it may be done effectively. It may lead students to recognise that food may be an instance of Gramsci's cultural hegemony, whereby the cultural norms of the West have manipulated the culture of Hong Kong

²⁸ SCMP Editorial, 'New animal welfare law must have bite' (*South China Morning Post*, 6 May 2019) <<https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/3009083/new-animal-welfare-law-must-have-bite>> accessed 31 May 2019; Ng Kang-chung, 'Thousands march for animal rights in Hong Kong with protesters demanding abusers get 10 years behind bars' (*South China Morning Post*, 19 May 2019) <<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3010854/thousands-march-animal-rights-hong-kong>> accessed 31 May 2019.

²⁹ Andrew Jensen Kerr, 'Pedagogy in Translation: Teaching Animal Law in China' (2014) 1 *Asian Journal of Legal Education* 33, 39-40.

³⁰ Chi-yue Chiu, 'Crossing borders and mixing cultures spark innovation; students must learn to think 'outside the box' (*Hong Kong Free Press*, 15 October 2017) <<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2017/10/15/crossing-borders-mixing-cultures-spark-innovation-students-must-learn-think-outside-box/>> accessed 5 November 2019.

³¹ Dogs and Cats Ordinance (Cap. 167).

and Chinese society, so that a Western worldview is now the accepted cultural norm.³² These thought processes are conducive to culturally universal thinking, as students are able not only to learn about and critically evaluate their own traditional heritage, but also become more well-informed on other countries' practices.

Finally, as a pioneer in Asia and a leading international city, the inclusion of animal protection curricula in Hong Kong schools would send a clear message to other countries to place greater focus on strengthening their own domestic animal laws, so as to ensure that animals are well-protected from exploitation.³³ This is especially pertinent in Asia, where animal brutality remains rampant, bear bile extraction and elephant rides being two of many examples. Taiwan's recent introduction of a 12-year compulsory animal protection education to its national school curriculum in January is an important step forward in Asia, and Hong Kong should follow Taiwan's initiative in order to establish its place as a champion in animal welfare in the region.³⁴

Why Animal Protection Curricula is Important: Benefits to Students

Building Active Citizenship Skills

Animal protection curricula in Hong Kong can develop students' active citizenship skills, as they are prompted to take ownership and agency over their individual choices. Such curricula is beneficial to all students, since vegetarian or vegan students also lack the information to support or defend their decision not to eat meat when challenged by others.³⁵ Knowledge of animal welfare gives students complete control over their choices³⁶, so that they have an opportunity to actively align their consumption habits with their own beliefs and provide evidence-based and logical

³² Kerr (n 29) 37-38.

³³ Luisa Tam, 'As a pet-loving city, Hong Kong should step up efforts against animal abuse' (*South China Morning Post*, 7 January 2019) <<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/society/article/2180967/pet-loving-city-hong-kong-should-step-efforts-against-animal>> accessed 1 June 2019.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ Julie Andrzejewski, 'Teaching Animal Rights at the University: Philosophy and Practice' (2003) 1 *Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy Journal* 16, 18.

³⁶ Andrzejewski (n 35) 24.

justifications for doing so.³⁷ Ideally, this information-exchange would create a butterfly effect, whereby through word-of-mouth or actions, students would share their knowledge with their communities, compelling those around them to regain control over their consumption habits. There is evidence that environmental education received by children indirectly influences their parents' recycling habits³⁸; similarly, students who study animal protection may also be able to influence their parents' consumption choices.

However, whether students ultimately change their diet to vegetarianism or veganism and become more environmentally-friendly is not the only aim of the curricula. Instead, what is most important is that each students' preconceived notions, which previously reinforced man-made systems of ecological destruction and unnecessary brutality towards animals, are subject to in-depth deliberation and scrutiny.³⁹ Even if students decide after careful thought to continue their habits of animal consumption, they are at least doing so with pointed thoughtfulness. They are aware of the consequences of their actions and may even account for the negative effects of their consumption in other ways.

In this sense, they take more responsibility for their actions than someone who is completely unaware of how their actions are impacting the environment, animals, and other humans, because they are not intentionally excusing their behaviour and ignoring challenging ethical questions, but instead have confronted their own moral conscience in making their lifestyle choices.⁴⁰ Even a small change in each student's animal consumption habits could have a large positive impact: a recent study found that as long as Hong Kong people limit their meat consumption to the recommended daily amount of 180 grams of meat, fish, and eggs per day, Hong Kong's livestock-related emissions could drop by 67%.⁴¹

³⁷ Andrzejewski (n 35) 28.

³⁸ S. M. Evans, M. E. Gill, and J. Marchant, 'Schoolchildren as educators: the indirect influence of environmental education in schools on parents' attitudes towards the environment' (1996) 30 *Journal of Biological Education* 243, 243-248.

³⁹ Bradley D. Rowe, 'Animal Rights and Human Growth: Intellectual Courage and Extending the Moral Community' (2009) 40 *Philosophical Studies in Education* 153, 161.

⁴⁰ Rowe (n 39) 162.

⁴¹ Tsang (n 25)

On the contrary, students who feel moved to take personal actions to improve animal welfare have the opportunity to cultivate a compassionate and harmonious lifestyle, based on an informed and nuanced choice.⁴² This curriculum would be a powerful form of experiential learning, as students see first-hand that they are capable of being agents of change through their everyday actions. It could include a multidisciplinary study of intersecting issues between all species cohabiting Earth, while covering policies and practices that respect animals, and ethical and socially responsible everyday habits of respect and advocacy for all people, animals, and the environment. Students could also be given the chance to interact directly with animals, which has been shown to be an important contributing factor to animal protection and welfare knowledge acquisition.⁴³ The knowledge that their actions can and do make a difference can generate feelings of empowerment and hope, which may catalyse leadership, active citizenship, and initiative-taking as the students grow to become community leaders of Hong Kong.

Encouraging Critical Thinking and Challenging Assumptions

Animal protection curricula can prompt critical thinking about speciesism and sustainability, as students are encouraged to re-evaluate their closely-held moral beliefs and behaviours towards animals that they have been taught by their parents, schools, and the society to practice and accept passively.⁴⁴ Rather than perceiving animals as a subjugated classes who are helpless to the strong will of mankind, curricula covering animal protection and welfare would challenge the prevalent assumptions and ignorance surrounding animal sentience and intelligence, thereby creating visibility and closeness between students and animals and giving students the chance to question news sources which endorse animal exploitation.⁴⁵ For instance, students may have assumed that language set humans apart from animals, while in fact, animal behaviour research has shown that animals use language to communicate amongst each other as well.⁴⁶ Additionally, rather than elevating themselves from non-human species and the rest of nature through an instrumental,

⁴² Andrzejewski (n 35) 29.

⁴³ Virginio Aguirre and Agustín Orihuela, 'Assessment of the impact of an animal welfare educational course with first grade children in rural schools in the state of Morelos, Mexico' (2010) 38 *Early Childhood Education Journal* 27, 30.

⁴⁴ Andrzejewski (n 35) 27.

⁴⁵ Andrzejewski (n 35) 24.

⁴⁶ Anne C. Bell and Constance L. Russell, 'Beyond human, beyond words: anthropocentrism, critical pedagogy and the poststructuralist turn' (2000) 25 *Canadian Journal of Education* 188, 194.

exploitative lens and viewing nature as a mere resource to be exploited for human gain, such curricula would encourage students to acknowledge their embeddedness in, and dependence on nature, and act as a catalyst for them to see that human sustainability is part and parcel of environmental and animal sustainability.⁴⁷

An animal protection curricula would improve students' willingness to critique prevailing discourses and consider alternative representations in the media, thus allowing students to identify and challenge instances of animal and environmental exploitation in their everyday lives.⁴⁸ The ability to think critically and challenge assumptions would no doubt also benefit students in other areas of learning, as they learn not to take news at face-value and find alternative sources of information before coming to well-informed conclusions. Students would be well-equipped to form their own opinions on contentious issues, rather than blindly trust what their teachers, elders, or peers say, making them independent thinkers who are able to engage in critical debates with one another to broaden their perspectives.

Creating Social Change to Combat Exploitation of Human Groups

Apart from giving students the tools to resist the exploitation of animals and our natural environment, introducing animal protection curricula in schools in Hong Kong can also empower students to resist exploitation between and among human groups, since many forms of domination are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing, regardless of species.⁴⁹ To this end, it is worthwhile to note the cross-section between human and animal suffering in animal philosophy. Rousseau argued if one is obliged to do no harm to fellow men, it is because men are sentient beings; since sentience is a quality common to both animals and men, it should at least give animals the right not to needlessly be mistreated by men.⁵⁰ Similarly, Bentham famously asked, "The question is not can they reason, nor can they talk, but can they suffer?".⁵¹ From Rousseau and Bentham's philosophising, to the works of modern philosophers such as Singer, it becomes clear

⁴⁷ Bell and Russell (n 46) 196.

⁴⁸ Bell and Russell (n 46) 191.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Rowe (n 39) 155.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

that the same idea of sentience that is used to prevent human suffering is similarly used to prevent animal suffering, and thus the basis not to abuse animals and fellow men are theoretically dependent. The paramountcy of animal sentience has been picked up in law as well, representing a step forward in animal welfare, at least in theory: Regionally, Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides that animals are sentient beings, thus conferring a duty on member states to consider animal welfare in implementing policies.⁵² Domestically, states may also pass legislation that recognise animal sentience; for instance, the section 53 of the 1988 Swedish Animal Welfare Ordinance refers to the requirement of anaesthesia for vertebrate animals who may undergo “physical or mental suffering”.

Therefore, it is no surprise that the language used to justify animal suffering has also been employed to validify human suffering, especially to target vulnerable minority groups in society. Simply put, the victimisation of animals has acted as a model and an inspiration for the victimisation of devalued humans.⁵³ In fact, the use of animals for human purposes without any consideration of their individual interests is so pervasive that it has become invisible to us, in the same way that the exploitation of racial and sexual minorities and women continues to be invisible in many countries around the world.⁵⁴

An obvious example is the intersectionality of speciesism and racism. Racist propaganda has compared groups of people to animals to suggest that they belong to a subhuman species, for example, in the case of slavery. However, it would be erroneous to claim that such rhetoric is no longer utilised; even today, Hong Kong is not immune to this phenomenon. As one of the most homogenous international cities, with more than 92 percent of Hong Kong’s population being Han Chinese, prejudice against ethnic minorities remains a problem; in fact, 6 in 10 Hong Kong residents think prejudice against ethnic minorities is common.⁵⁵ The 2012 Kong Qingdong

⁵² Steven P. McCulloch, ‘Brexit and Animal Welfare Impact Assessment: Analysis of the Threats Brexit Poses to Animal Protection in the UK, EU and Internationally’ (2019) 9 *Animals (Basel)* 117, 7.

⁵³ Andrzejewski, Baltodano, and Symcox (n 2) 143.

⁵⁴ Pederson (n 1) 4.

⁵⁵ Mandy Zheng and Rachel Leung, ‘Is Hong Kong racist? Prejudice against ethnic minorities, especially Africans, undermines city’s claim to be truly international’ (*South China Morning Post*, 21 July 2018) <<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/community/article/2156199/hong-kong-racist-prejudice-against-ethnic-minorities>> accessed 31 May 2019; Raquel Carvalho, ‘Racism is alive and well in Hong Kong, but there’s growing sympathy for refugee children’ (*South China Morning Post*, 19 April 2018)

incident, where a Peking University professor called Hong Kong people “dogs”⁵⁶ following which a Hong Kong advertisement retaliated by referring to Chinese Mainlanders as “locusts”⁵⁷, is an illustration of how racist propaganda uses animalistic language to dehumanise people and enlarge societal divisions.

Another example of the intersectionality between social justice and animal issues is speciesism and sexism. The role of women and animals are similar in the patriarchal social order, that is to be exploited for their femaleness and serve as docile objects for the possession, use, and pleasure of men.⁵⁸ Female animals are doubly abused in animal husbandry: their reproductive capacities are first exploited in order to produce milk and eggs for human consumption; then, when their reproductive efficiencies end, they are brutally slaughtered for their flesh. For instance, dairy cows face appalling treatment by the dairy industry, as they are forced to serve as industrial milking machines. Starting at 15 months old, dams are forced into a “rape rack”, where they are artificially inseminated.⁵⁹ This sexual violence is a form of “systematic cruelty”⁶⁰ and is part of a greater problem of the sexualised violence of the powerful over the vulnerable, of men over women.⁶¹

Similarly, women in Hong Kong are objectified because of their femaleness: 1 in 7 women will experience sexual violence in her lifetime.⁶² Women are overexploited in the workplace also: they

<<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-crime/article/2142397/racism-alive-and-well-hong-kong-theres-growing-sympathy>> accessed 24 August 2019.

⁵⁶ Jonathan Watts, ‘Chinese Professor calls Hong Kong residents ‘dogs of British imperialists’ (*South China Morning Post*, 24 January 2012) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/24/chinese-professor-hong-kong-dogs>> accessed 30 May 2019.

⁵⁷ BBC News, ‘Hong Kong advert calls Chinese mainlanders ‘locusts’ (*BBC*, 1 February 2012) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-16828134>> accessed 30 May 2019.

⁵⁸ Andrzejewski, Baltodano, and Symcox (n 2) 142.

⁵⁹ Mackenzie L. April, ‘Readying the Rape Rack: Feminism and the Exploitation of Non-Human Reproductive Systems’ (2019) 8 *Dissenting Voices* 1, 51-61.

⁶⁰ Chas Newkey-Burden, ‘Dairy is scary. The public are waking up to the darkest part of farming’ (*The Guardian*, 30 March 2017) <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/30/dairy-scary-public-farming-calves-pens-alternatives>> accessed 30 May 2019.

⁶¹ Corey Lee Wrenn, ‘Fifty Shades of Oppression: Unexamined Sexualized Violence against Women and Other Animals’ (2014) 2 *Relations: Beyond Anthropocentrism* 1, 135-140.

⁶² Hong Kong Lawyer, ‘Let’s Talk About Harassment’ (*Hong Kong Lawyer*, June 2018) <<http://www.hk-lawyer.org/content/let%E2%80%99s-talk-about-harassment>> accessed 31 May 2019.

are paid HKD\$15 less than men for doing the same work.⁶³ On top of that, women are expected to perform many hours of housework to serve their husbands and children. This type of “shadow labour” is not remunerated as the work is done in the private sphere of the house, and so does not have the same status as paid work. Taking a strong stance against speciesism could conceivably have a knock-on effect on sexism given their conceptual dependence, as it may send a message that women, both animal and human, are not objects to be abused and exploited.⁶⁴

A final example is the intersectionality of speciesism and classism. Historically, meat production and consumption were symbols of social status and was a tool for capital accumulation.⁶⁵ This trend continues today, as agribusiness industries continue to function in the interests of elite, wealthy business owners and exploit humans and animals for profit-maximisation. Animals’ bodies are often modified to optimise their productivity, through artificial insemination, mutilation, and genetic manipulation. For example, dairy cows’ tails are often docked, that is a partial amputation of up to two-thirds of the cow’s tail⁶⁶, supposedly because it prevents disease and inconveniences milkers, despite the vast evidence that tail docking causes distress and pain of chronic levels due to common inflammations and infections at the lesion.⁶⁷

Similarly, workers in these agribusiness industries are exploited and made to work in unsanitary and dangerous conditions. In the United States, most farm work is performed by undocumented immigrants, who are paid subsistence wages and have to endure long hours of taxing work in subhuman conditions, with little or no rest days, no health insurance, and no benefits; since most farm work is unregulated by the Government, there is nothing that the immigrant workers can do

⁶³ Edmund Ho, ‘On average, women in Hong Kong still earn less than men in the same roles’ (*Young Post*, 28 July 2018) <<https://yp.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/110007/average-women-hong-kong-still-earn-less-men-same-roles>> accessed 31 May 2019.

⁶⁴ Jason Wyckoff, ‘Linking Sexism and Speceisism’ (2014) 29 *Hypatia* 4, 721.

⁶⁵ Andrzejewski, Baltodano, and Symcox (n 2) 144.

⁶⁶ American Veterinary Medical Association, ‘Welfare Implications of Tail Docking of Cattle: Literature Review’ (*AVMA*, 29 August 2014) <<https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/LiteratureReviews/Pages/Welfare-Implications-of-Tail-Docking-of-Cattle.aspx>> accessed 31 May 2019.

⁶⁷ American Veterinary Medical Association, ‘Welfare Implications of Tail Docking of Dairy Cattle’ (*AVMA*, 25 April 2006) <http://dairy.mercyforanimals.org/AVMA_Welfare_Implications_of_Tail_Docking_of_Dairy_Cattle.pdf> accessed 31 May 2019.

to enforce their labour rights.⁶⁸ Although no evidence of similar abusive practices in Hong Kong has emerged, Hong Kong imports a percentage of its eggs (19%) and frozen pork (6%), chicken (23%), and beef (16%) from the United States⁶⁹, thereby generating a demand for animal products tainted with such exploitative labour practices, so the problem faced by farm workers is not completely alien to Hong Kong consumers. Resistance to cruelty to animals is therefore simultaneously resistance against corporate power and the classist economic system that allows abusive, exploitative practices towards both humans and non-human animals to continue without any end in sight.⁷⁰

These three perverted paradigms reflect how time-old, oppressive human-animal relations from which racism, sexism, and speciesism arise are grounded in capitalist economic systems of greed and profit-maximisation, whereby human labour and animal bodies are exploited to grow the wealth of the elite 1%.⁷¹ It is inevitable that human exploitation of animals directly enables and fuels exploitation of human victims. If we feel that we can exploit non-human animals because we are more powerful than they are, and we judge that we can benefit from their exploitation, the same logic can and will be used to justify discrimination other disadvantaged groups; discrimination against other humans becomes that much easier.⁷² The introduction of animal protection curricula would fundamentally challenge exploitative human practices towards animals, developing higher levels of empathy towards animal species, and in turn, towards humans.⁷³

Encouraging Human Moral Growth

Animal protection curricula allows students to achieve Dewey's conception of human moral growth, defined as the constant expansion of horizons to welcome "alien" points of view, and consequently, to form new purposes and responses based on new perspectives.⁷⁴ As students

⁶⁸ Sadhbh Walshe, 'Field work's dirty secret: agribusiness exploitation of undocumented labor' (*The Guardian*, 31 January 2013) <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/31/agribusiness-exploitation-undocumented-labor>> accessed 31 May 2019.

⁶⁹ Food and Health Bureau (n 27).

⁷⁰ Andrzejewski, Baltodano, and Symcox (n 2) 145.

⁷¹ Andrzejewski, Baltodano, and Symcox (n 2) 142.

⁷² Andrzejewski, Baltodano, and Symcox (n 2) 146.

⁷³ Kelly L. Thompson and Eleonora Gullone, 'Promotion of Empathy and Prosocial Behaviour in Children Through Humane Education' (2003) 38 *Australian Psychologist* 1.

⁷⁴ Rowe (n 39) 153.

question their consumption habits which force animals to make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives and ask themselves how these patterns of exploitation have been and are still applied to brutalise humans and Mother Nature, their mental processes are deeply challenged and their lives disrupted. This creates a transformative and educative venue for self-discovery, development, and improvement, in which lies the opportunity for human moral growth.⁷⁵ Once students have the knowledge to think critically about their own practices of animal use, they are in a better position to confront their cognitive dissonance of, on the one hand reliance and enjoyment of animal products, and on the other hand the suffering and exploitation which is inseparable from the production processes.⁷⁶ They are able to make conscious, deliberate actions and live an intentional and active life instead of being possessed by “unthinking habits”, which marks an ascent of human moral growth.⁷⁷

Furthering the Ideals of Humane Education as a Whole

The introduction of animal protection curricula play an instrumental role in humane education, by contributing to the role that humane education should occupy to promote compassion and respect for “the other”, be they human or non-human animals.⁷⁸ Humane education has been revisited by schools recently, due to increased calls for students to receive character education.⁷⁹ It focuses on individual traits including tolerance, honesty, and kindness, and an ability to think independently, which have been described as the “best qualities of human beings”.⁸⁰ Animal protection curricula achieve the four broad aims of humane education: to develop a life-affirming ethic for both human and non-human animals, raise consciousness of how humans, animals, and nature are interconnected and mutually interdependent, encourage critical discernment of different value systems, and engage in democratic principles and active citizenship.⁸¹ Thus, animal protection

⁷⁵ Rowe (n 39) 158-159.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Pederson (n 1) 5.

⁷⁹ Lydia S. Antoncic, ‘A new era in humane education: How troubling youth trends and a call for character education are breathing new life into efforts to educate our youth about the value of all life’ (2003) 9 *Animal Law* 183, 185; Thompson and Gullone (n 73) 15.

⁸⁰ Antoncic (n 79) 189.

⁸¹ Pederson (n 1) 5.

curricula are an unavoidable part of character education, in order to bring out valuable human traits in students.

Another important function of humane education in the form of animal protection curricula is that it raises the level of discourse among Hong Kong students to generate increased awareness of the “violence link”, which states that animal abuse has a desensitising effect and leads to violence towards humans.⁸² More importantly, such curricula also acts as a vehicle to prevent this “violence link” from perpetuating continually, by fostering traits of empathy, mutual respect, and responsibility in students towards all forms of life and the environment.⁸³ Studies have found that children who are routinely exposed to animal protection curricula and humane education over a period of time, for instance through learning about companion animals in their school curricula, have higher levels of empathy⁸⁴, improved social skills and self-esteem, and are also less prone to violence, as they can demonstrate usage of non-violent conflict resolution methods.⁸⁵

Interspecies Education and Peace

What makes interspecies education through animal protection and welfare curricula in Hong Kong schools even more powerful is that it fosters peace. As an extension of the “violence link” argument, philosophers including Mohandas Gandhi, Mildred Norman, and Anna Kingsford have argued that widespread animal exploitation breeds the necessary mindset for domination of others and waging of wars.⁸⁶ The acute level of violence required to abuse and slaughter an animal to turn it from a living, sentient animal into the edible “meat” we see on our plates is synonymous to the violence and bloodshed required to turn a living man into a dead soldier on the battlefield. The mental processes and logic that one uses to justify harming innocent animals can equally be used

⁸² Frank R. Ascione, Claudia V. Weber, and David S. Wood, ‘The abuse of animals and domestic violence: A national survey of shelters for women who are battered’ (1997) 5 *Society and Animals* 205-218; Frank R. Ascione, ‘Battered Women’s Reports of Their Partners’ and Their Children’s Cruelty to Animals’ (1998) 1 *Journal of Emotional Abuse* 119-133; Clifton P. Flynn, ‘Animal Abuse in Childhood and Later Support for Interpersonal Violence in Families’ (1999) 7 *Society & Animals* 161-172; Pederson (n 1) 9; Thompson and Gullone (n 73) 9.

⁸³ Antoncic (n 79) 195.

⁸⁴ R. Arbour, T. Signal, and N. Taylor, ‘Teaching Kindness: The Promise of Humane Education’ (2009) 17 *Society and Animals* 136-148.

⁸⁵ Antoncic (n 79) 196; Thompson and Gullone (n 73) 16.

⁸⁶ Andrzejewski, Baltodano, and Symcox (n 2) 147.

to justify war against an “enemy”, who is often first demonised, vilified, and put on par with animals. Indeed, as Tolstoy wrote, “As long as there are slaughterhouses, there will be battlefields”.⁸⁷ Therefore, the value of introducing animal protection and welfare curricula in Hong Kong is that students will feel empowered to model non-violent values in their daily lives, thereby taking concrete steps towards preventing violence and wars in the future.

Critiques of Introducing Animal Protection Curricula in Hong Kong Schools: A Reply

Brainwashing Students and Exploits Their Growing Social Awareness

One critique is that animal protection curricula which cover animal welfare exploits the growing social awareness of teenagers and their concern for the helpless. Such curricula are not usually tempered with knowledge of the invaluable part that animals play in improving human health, for example, through animal testing, or students’ personal experiences with disease and death. Instead, teachers of the subject often go too far, by promoting an animal rights agenda during unrelated class activities, for instance during a discussion of civil rights.⁸⁸ Students are therefore misguided into making premature, rash decisions; they are effectively brainwashed into supporting the animal protection and welfare agenda.

A simple reply to this objection is that no single Hong Kong school curriculum is value-free.⁸⁹ Anthropocentrism is itself a value which brainwashes students, manifesting itself in silence and omissions in current school curricula.⁹⁰ From the way that schools separate humans and animals in value education, to the absence of animal ethics and welfare in textbook materials or choice of study visits, the selective focus is itself a manifestation of anthropocentrism.⁹¹ One example is that an exclusive focus on human language in the human-centred epistemological framework in schools

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Deborah Runkle and Ellen Granger, ‘Animal Rights: Teaching or Deceiving Kids’ (1997) 277 *Science* 1419.

⁸⁹ Andrzejewski (n 35) 21.

⁹⁰ Bell and Russell (n 46) 191.

⁹¹ Pederson (n 1) 8.

“forgets” the nonverbal communication of animals and their own linguistic capabilities⁹²; here, an apparently neutral study in fact supports a “hidden curriculum” of speciesism.⁹³

Another example is that animals are dealt with almost entirely within the natural sciences, where they are studied in terms of biological facts.⁹⁴ This distinction between human and animal is illustrated through a Primary Two curriculum proposed by the Curriculum Development Council in 1994: “Animal world” and “weather” are labelled under the “Natural world”, as opposed to “people who serve us” and “my friends” which are nested under “Living environment”.⁹⁵ Even when animals are discussed in Secondary classrooms, learning exercises focus exclusively on protecting endangered plants and animal species⁹⁶ which, despite being a pressing issue, is exclusionary towards farm animals. Rarely, if ever, do teachers discuss the reality of factory farming or animal sentience.⁹⁷

As a result of this, animals are seen primarily as species representatives, rather than sentient, feeling beings.⁹⁸ Thus, it is clear that Hong Kong school curricula are themselves exploiting students’ growing social awareness, by keeping them in the dark about the impact of widespread animal and ecological exploitation on their future livelihoods and pushing a one-sided anthropocentric agenda. To eliminate bias and ensure that students gain a rounded perspective, it is necessary for schools to include animal protection in their curricula, so as to balance the anthropocentric perspective that is currently dominating the curricula.

Shifting the Focus from Human to Non-human Problems

⁹² Bell and Russell (n 46) 190.

⁹³ Pederson (n 1) 3.

⁹⁴ John Chi Kin Lee, ‘Environmental Education in Schools in Hong Kong’ (1997) 3 *Environmental Education Research* 359, 364.

⁹⁵ *ibid* 365.

⁹⁶ *ibid* 366.

⁹⁷ Antoncic (n 72) 188.

⁹⁸ Pederson (n 1) 7.

Another critique is that animal protection curricula in Hong Kong schools would shift the focus of students from pressing human problems to unimportant non-human problems, when in fact students should be trying to solve human problems before worrying about non-human problems that do not affect them.⁹⁹ This is a false dilemma, as the discussion of the moral standing of animals is part of a larger project of human moral growth, and part of the troubling status quo of oppression, exploitation, and abuse of power exhibited towards all minorities, human and non-human animals alike.¹⁰⁰ As such, problems associated with the moral standing of animals are not only problems for non-human animals but for humans as well.¹⁰¹

Moreover, the human moral consciousness is not limited. As our collective consciousness expands with increased human moral growth and rapid technological expansion, all ethical problems should receive renewed urgency and should not be prioritised according to whether it involves humans or non-human animals.¹⁰² Such a prioritisation is artificial, as humans are intricately linked with animals and the environment. As human activity continues to destroy the Earth, students must start to consider sustainability as not only the continued existence of the human race, but also the sustenance and flourishing of the ecosystems of plants and animals, all of which are necessary to support human development. A mindset that is capital-focused and driven by artificial shortage and competition is precisely what the exploitation of animals and minorities has nurtured over time, and students must take a proactive approach to subvert this mindset.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is apparent that animal protection curricula would bring many benefits to students in terms of their physical, mental, and moral growth. Although the SPCA Education Department gives talks on the topic of “Love and Concern for Animals”¹⁰³ and offers a Humane Education

⁹⁹ Evans, Gill, and Marchant (n 38) 154.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ SPCA, ‘Education Tours & Talks – all are Welcome!’ (SPCA, 2019) <<https://www.sPCA.org.hk/en/education-and-outreach/education>> accessed 5 November 2019.

Package, which includes lesson plans and activities for teachers to integrate into their school curricula¹⁰⁴, there has been no formal push by the Hong Kong government to integrate animal welfare into school curricula at a city-wide level. This is clearly inadequate, as it is the role of Hong Kong schools as educational institutes to shape the thinking processes of students to be more inclusive, environmentally friendly, and engaged, in order to solve the impending environmental and socio-economic problems of the 21st century. Ideally, through such a forward-thinking curriculum, our society's future leaders will grow into more humane, peaceable, and caring global citizens, who make a conscious effort to ensure that no beings, whether human or animal, are harmed for their profit or comfort. As a species, mankind will have an attitudinal shift away from violence and towards non-violent coexistence. This will benefit our livelihoods in the long-term, as our Earth becomes a more sustainable place. It is now time for Hong Kong to catch up with countries such as Taiwan, and legislate for the inclusion of animal protection education in school curricula.

A potential path for introducing such animal protection curricula is by including it in the well-established Liberal Studies curriculum in the The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education, which is meant to focus on raising students' awareness of current affairs. Teachers could also be given training on animal attributes, philosophies, and practices of peace and non-violence, so that they would be well-trained to instruct students on how they can make a positive difference to the lives of animals and their natural habitats.

¹⁰⁴ SPCA, 'Humane Education Package' (SPA, 2019) <<https://www.sPCA.org.hk/en/education-and-outreach/education/humane-education-package>> accessed 5 November 2019.

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