

Executive Summary

According to The HKSAR Government: “Life Planning is an on-going and lifelong process for personal fulfilment...At the schooling stage, life planning education...is not merely...when they are in need of making subject or career choice”¹.

Therefore, Life Planning Education and Career Guidance (CLP education) ought to play a significant role in fostering a student’s “...self-understanding, personal planning” and “...goal setting”.

The Government announced in 2014 that mandatory CLP education in the senior secondary stage, would begin at the start of the 2014-2015 academic year. To support the required preparation work, the government also announced that it would provide a grant to public sector schools of more than HK\$500,000 to operate such classes commencing at the start of the same academic year.²

Outlined in ‘Guide on Life Planning Education and Career Guidance for Secondary Schools’ published later that year³, the Education Bureau encouraged schools to adopt a ‘whole-school’ approach⁴ to CLP education. This was intended to help students understand the concept of ‘Multiple Pathway’⁵, and encourage them to make study/career decisions in accordance with their interests, abilities and orientations.

Five years have passed since the full-scale implementation of CLP education in the Secondary School curriculum. Yet, according to research, more than 41% of surveyed secondary school students only ‘[know] a little bit’ (26.4%) or ‘[know] nothing’ about Life Planning; 14.7% stated they

¹ Education Bureau (2017). “What is Life Planning?”. Retrieved February 14, 2019, from https://careerguidance.edb.hkedcity.net/edb/opencms/lifeplanning/theme-area/guide-on-life-planning-education-and-career-guidance/?__locale=en

² The HKSAR Government (2014). *Policy Address 2014*. Paragraph 105.

³ Career Guidance Section, School Development Division, Education Bureau (2014). *Guide on Life Planning Education and Career Guidance for Secondary Schools (1st Edition)*.

⁴ Which means all teaching staff should be familiar with the concept of life planning, and participating in schools’ CLP education.

⁵ Booklet 9 of the Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (2017) written by the Education Bureau, is named “Career and Life Planning – Multiple Pathways for All Students to Excel”

‘[had] nearly no idea’ about their life planning progress⁶.

Furthermore, another research conducted in 2018 noted 39% of survey students had done nothing to prepare for their career pathway⁷. Both of these studies indicate room for improvement in the implementation of CLP education.

Secondary education is an important transitional stage for students. Well-implemented CLP education can help students understand their personal development, build up career prospects and life goals, and help smooth the transition from school to work.

Therefore, this research paper takes a two-fold approach: 1) review schools’ CLP education and implementation strategies (using the opinions of both students and schools); 2) propose possible measures to enhance the effectiveness of CLP education.

⁶ 香港中文大學傳訊及公共關係處。2017年5月10日。〈有「程」有「趣」中大發表香港高中學生的生涯發展現況調查結果〉。

⁷ On.cc 東網。2018年1月20日。〈生涯規劃成效存疑 39%高中生無為前途準備〉。

Main Discussion

- 1. The Education Bureau has encouraged schools to practice a ‘whole-school’ approach to CLP education. Despite this, teachers continued to participate in CLP education and related professional training remained to be in minority in schools.**

The school survey found 6.80 teachers, on average, were allocated to handle CLP-related matters (the estimated teacher-participation rate was only 14.2%)⁸. Despite almost all of the surveyed schools having fulfilled the Education Bureau’s requirement of having 2 CLP-professionally-trained teachers per school, the average number of teachers completing the associated professional training was only 3.14.

These statistics indicate teachers have a passive attitude towards CLP education. Among the surveyed schools, only small numbers of teachers have either implemented CLP education or completed the related professional training. It also raises questions about the adoption of the Education Bureau’s ‘whole-school’ approach.

- 2. The heavy focus on further studies, as the most recommended post-secondary pathway, raises questions about delivering the ‘Multiple Pathway’ concept.**

When asked to prioritize their foci when discussing pathways for students, most teachers put a heavy emphasis on further studies. The average-ranking score for academic-stream (e.g. Bachelor degree, sub-degree) and career-based (e.g. Diploma and professional certificate programs) further studies was 1.09 and 2.96 respectively (based on a 1-4 ranking system, 1 being the highest priority). Consequently the surveyed schools tend to place lower importance on ‘Employment’ (average ranking: 2.96) and ‘Starting a business’ (average ranking: 3.89).

In support of this, nearly 30% (29.1%) of the youth participants in the online survey agreed with the statement: ‘Secondary school CLP

⁸ Assuming a 24-class school with 48 teaching staffs, calculated according to the class-teacher ratios of secondary school (Junior forms 1:1.8, Senior forms 1:2.1). On.cc 東網。〈政府擬落實教席學位化 1.6 萬教師有望加薪 1 萬〉。2018 年 5 月 29 日。

education cannot help students understand “Multiple Pathways”.’

Despite being a lower percentage than those disagreeing (46.5%), it is clear that with the heavy stress on further studies, a significant amount of respondents hold a sceptical attitude towards the approach of schools.

As stated by the Education Bureau, the objectives of CLP education are to: smooth the transition beyond senior secondary studies, and to promote “Multiple Pathway”. According to the above statistics, these objectives seem not to be fulfilled.

3. Young people’s rating of current CLP education is lower than teachers’ self-evaluation.

The average student rating of current CLP Education is 6.01 (on a scale of 0 to 10, 0 being the lowest). This is lower than the self-evaluation of teachers with a mean score of 7.27).

In the category ‘helping students to manage and adapt to the transition from school to work’, both the mean score of surveyed teachers (5.86) and students (5.96) is below 6. This indicates that both groups were not confident about the performance of current CLP education. It is also the lowest rating amongst the 7 surveyed evaluative items.

4. Notable differences could be observed from what schools were providing and what students expected to get.

Among the 9 asked modes of carrying out CLP education (gathered from the school survey and online youth survey), there was a notable difference between what the schools provided and what young people expected in 4 of them.

According to a majority of teachers (74.0%) and students (63.0%), the most important and effective part of CLP education was the career-related job experience.

As students are the major ‘users’, providing services that meet their

needs is essential to boost the effectiveness of CLP education. Given the high level of satisfaction with career-related job experience, it suggests this could be expanded in future CLP education.

5. Teachers face major difficulties when tailor-making curriculum for CLP education.

According to the school survey, teachers experienced major challenges when implementing CLP education. In particular, according to the school survey, these curriculum-related problems included 'the wide and deep coverage' (59.2%), 'inadequate lesson time' (50.5%) and 'inadequate human resources' (48.5%)

To help students become more aware of their growth throughout the life-planning process, some of the interviewed experts and teachers pointed out it is important for the CLP curriculum to demonstrate continuity. This would be both horizontally (within different learning experiences) and vertically (within different years of study).

6. In spite of most young students perceiving parents as important life-planning stakeholders, schools disregard parents' voices. In addition, parents lack understanding of and pay little attention to CLP education: both greatly limit CLP education.

Results from the online youth survey show that the majority of youth (82.2%) considered parents to be their most important influencers in life planning. Among the focus-group participants, one also stated that her parents' expectations about her career had a direct effect on her decision-making. Yet, less than half (46.5%) of the surveyed schools reported listening to parent opinions when evaluating strategies for CLP education. Conversely, 42.7% of the surveyed schools claimed that 'Students and parents overlooking CLP education' were obstacles to their CLP education program.

Parents are important stakeholders in CLP education. Neglecting the views of parents (whether it is due to them knowing little about life planning, or any other factors) can only have a detrimental effect when it comes to implementing CLP education.

7. **Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), alumnus and businesses are all important CLP education stakeholders. Full support and assistance from these entities is crucial for schools to better implement CLP education.**

The context of CLP education is becoming increasingly dynamic as both society and the job market undergo ever more rapid changes. As innovative ideas and technology evolve (e.g. Artificial Intelligence/A.I.), teachers who also bear the responsibility for teaching work, need more time and resources to keep up-to-date.

As a result, full support and assistance from other stakeholders, (including NGOs, alumnus and businesses) who can help to reduce the workload of teachers and offer new insights, is essential:

- (1) NGOs: Based on the opinion of the interviewed teachers and experts, NGOs can serve as external partners and deliver services for schools, to complement their capital and human input.
- (2) Alumnus: An interviewed teacher believed alumnus help to motivate students by acting as role models and peer mentors.
- (3) Business: 50.5% of the surveyed schools reported having joined internship programmes. These opportunities provide a key role in offering career-related job experiences for students.

Recommendations

Based on the above research findings and discussion points, we propose the following measures to improve the effectiveness of CLP education.

1. **Strengthen teacher skill sets to increase awareness of and attention to CLP education.**

The HKSAR Government is recommended to:

- (1) Increase the per-school number of teachers participating in CLP

associated professional training. Instead of the current 'at least two teachers for each school, it should be all teachers need to be trained. This can be done progressively over 5 years.

- (2) Enable teachers to pick up voluntary, short-term work experience (especially in new industries), during long school holidays (e.g. Summer Holiday). Decisions can be made on a per-school basis.

These measures can help teachers understand more about the constantly changing job market, and offer more relevant and current advice. In turn this would improve the adoption of the Education Department's 'whole-school approach' while strengthening its function in 'helping students to manage and adapt to the transition from school to work'.

To encourage teachers' participation, the above two mentioned measures should be: a) considered as professional training experience⁹, and; b) counted as part of their working hours.

2. Subsidize companies and organizations to encourage internships for secondary school students.

As stated, companies and NGOs (of all sizes) are important stakeholders in CLP education. Therefore they can all provide short-term, career-related work experience (around one week) to secondary school students. To further encourage this initiative, the government can cover any incurred costs via a direct subsidy. An existing example of this is the VTC's 'Apprenticeship training', where subsidies act as a way to open up more opportunities for students.

3. Establish a new, designated CLP education team under the Education Bureau.

The new team would handle all the issues related to career-related

⁹ Starting from 2003, teachers are encouraged to meet the soft target of engaging in CPD activities of not less than 150 hours in a three-year cycle, including both structured learning (e.g. seminars, conferences, staff development days) as well as other modes of learning (e.g. collaborative practices, mentoring and professional reading). Committee of Professional Development of Teachers and Principals (2015). "Frequently asked questions". Retrieved 12th February, 2019 from: <https://www.cotap.hk/index.php/en/faqs>

work experience for secondary school students, for example:

- (1) Ensuring the quality of the experience by conducting basic reviews of; the role and the nature of job; the expected learning outcome for students; the appraisal method.
- (2) Setting up a centralized database to distribute information about career-related job experience. Students can be encouraged to join by allowing them to register as members for free, and directly apply to their opportunity of interest, without having to wait for a teacher to go through administrative procedure.
- (3) Liaising with the Labour Department to give out information related to youth employment (e.g. 'Youth Employment Start (Y.E.S.)', 'apprenticeship training') in a more coordinated manner.

As this newly established team would handle most of the career-related job experiences for students, the stress of teachers should begin to be lessened. An additional result of this is that the CLP education's function of 'Career Exploration' can be strengthened.

4. Involving parents as a part of the CLP education team.

The research indicates that parents play an important role in the life-planning process of students. However, they tend neither to value life planning nor understand much about CLP education. To engage parents, the Bureau could produce a new series of 'Announcements in the Public Interest' (APIs) and conduct more parent talks, including the concept of 'Multiple Pathway'.

Subsequently, more parents should be willing and able to develop a stronger connection with schools about this subject. Ultimately this would help to improve CLP education in schools through raising parental awareness and continuing reinforcement at home.

5. Starting a long-term, on-going research project after students receive CLP education, to evaluate its effectiveness.

It has been five years since the full-scale implementation of CLP education in the Secondary School Curriculum. The Education Bureau should start a long-term, on-going research project to track the progress of students after receiving CLP education. Possible areas of study would be: the ability to develop personal career goals and pathways, and the ability to co-relate academic study and career development.

It is believed that this research project would provide scientific evidence about the effectiveness of CLP education. It would also make room for solid, evidence-based, discussion within society about CLP education.