

HKACMGM's feedback on the Initial Thoughts of Task Force on Review of School Curriculum

On the unique roles of life planning education and career guidance in Whole-person Development

Introduction

The Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters (HKACMGM) was set up in 1959 as a collaboration of the Education Department and front-line career guidance counsellors and schools leaders who were committed to promoting career guidance for the betterment of secondary students' study and career opportunities through building professional capacity of career teachers and educators. We now have 400-420 public secondary schools enrolled as school members, with all executive committee members voluntarily and proactively serving the Association through policy advocacy, curriculum development, professional training, parent and public education.

HKACMGM was invited to attend a meeting with core members of the Task Force on School Curriculum Review in early May, during which we exchanged views and voiced out key concerns from the perspective of experienced career practitioners. During the discussion, we supported the proposals to sustain provision of a diversified curriculum to cater for student's ability and aptitude, review of core subjects and various combination of electives to prepare and groom talents for further studies. We expressed concerns towards recognition of ApL attainment by local universities, despite our support the role of ApL to widen students' choice in senior secondary curriculum. We also highlighted good practices in some local schools and systems like UK that incorporate career/future orientation component in STEM/STEAM education, stressing the need to facilitate students' making sense of their learning in school to authentic contexts, application of knowledge and skills of STEM/STEAM to solve problems in real life, and addressing gender stereotype in career choices.¹

The followings are highlights of our concerns and recommendations for consideration by the Task Force. We believe, as a long-standing and reputed, impartial professional organization in the field of career and general guidance and counselling, our views should be considered seriously.

The positioning of Career and Life Planning in the coming consultation paper

Career and Life Planning has been mentioned in various points in the 'initial thoughts for consultation paper' (the Paper), yet the relationship between Life Education and Life Planning Education & Career Guidance (CLP) is very unclear and misleading. The position of CLP should be clarified, and should be coupled with careful thoughts of resource allocation to CLP. From the paper, the concept of Life-planning has been confused with Life Education, causing a lot of confusion and limiting the impact each can cause

¹ Refer to an article related to STEM and career development in HKACMGM's newsletter: <https://www.hkacmgm.org/vpdf/vpdf.html?pdfname=june2018&numPage=15#page/12>

to the development of our students. While the former focus more on one's life roles at different stages and their decision-making and goal-setting capacities as a result, the latter is on the sculpturing on one's spirituality and emphasises the equilibrium between body, soul and mind. With the different foci, the expected outcome of the adoption of the two concepts should be different as well, but it is regretful that they have also been misinterpreted in the paper, showing a lack of genuine understanding of the committee towards the concepts, which in turn reflects a general misconceptions held by the public as well.

In fact, the committee bears a weighty responsibility in defining the two concepts and rectifying the misunderstanding, and by no means should it attempt to reduce or equate the two as one for any administrative or even political purposes. We reflected our views to CDI in light of the revision of Senior Education Curriculum Guide in late 2018. For the time being, the 2017 revision still uses the terminology 'Career and Life Planning'².

Career Guidance in a global context

"Career and Life Planning" itself is a proper concept which carries its specific content -- facilitating understanding of self (knowledge, skills, values, attitude), exploration of possible options and pathways in further study and work, and most importantly development of skills and commitment in career decisions to be made in various stages of transitions. It is a lifelong process, a key component of whole-person development; facilitation of career development involves various intervention strategies, from career guidance curriculum to career-related experiences, mentoring and the indispensable individual advising/counselling. The term is not arbitrary representation.

In fact, "Career Guidance", "Career Development" and "Career Education" are used widely in academic arena and in global organization directly engaging in discussion of educational issues. For instance, OECD stresses the significance of career guidance in promoting equity of educational opportunities, nurturing individual and social goods through development of human capacity and combating qualification/skills mismatch over the past two decades. OECD published the "Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap" paper in 2004³, and recently confirmed the value of integrating career development of youth through employer engagement: "Career guidance is both an individual and a social good: it helps individuals to progress in their learning and work, but it also helps the effective functioning of the labour and learning markets, and contributes to a range of social policy goals, including social mobility and equity." Impacts and significance of career guidance across countries are confirmed by OECD's PISA 2015 data.⁴

² Refer to https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/renewal/Guides/SECG%20booklet%209_en_20180831.pdf

³ <http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/careerguidancepolicyreviewhomepage.htm>

⁴ Working it out: CAREER GUIDANCE AND EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT (OECD Education Working Papers No. 175)

The root of Career Guidance

Career guidance is much more than a remedial service or support programme, in broad sense it is an essential component of school curriculum -- planned experienced with educational purposes. Considering the conceptualization of career guidance in various developed education systems, CLP has its' role and unique features regarded as a promising independent component in education system with well-defined concepts, scope of services (including curriculum, formal and informal), required learning outcomes, professional standards expected on practitioners, and differentiation from other student support/development dimensions:

Career guidance and counseling has been developed for over 100 hundred years with different well-developed theories and their empirical support in the western countries, such as the US. Development of career guidance and counseling in the East Asia societies, such as Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong basically translate the Western models with adaptation to cater for cultural difference, as described "indigenization" in Taiwan. Many career and life planning research, intervention strategies and assessment tools have been developed to suit the local culture. Career guidance was translated to "生涯規劃" in Taiwan in early years. In Hong Kong, "Career and life planning" was translated from the translation of Taiwan a few years ago since the introduction of New Senior Secondary curriculum:

- UK - Career Guidance
- US - Career Guidance and Planning
- Australia - Career Guidance and Development
- Taiwan- 生涯規劃咨商 and 生涯發展學習
(Name translated from Career Guidance and Planning in the US)
- Mainland China - 學生發展指導
- Macao - 生涯規劃
- Singapore- Education and Career Guidance
- South Korea - Career Guidance and Education
- Japan - Career Guidance 進路指導

"Career and Life Planning", introduced in various EDB policy papers in 2014, was already NOT an ideal terminology. It is likely a 'back-translation' of 生涯規劃 – life as 生涯 and planning as 規劃. Yet, 生涯規劃 is the Chinese translation of Career Guidance invented and adopted by Taiwanese scholars like Prof. Jin Shu-ren (金樹人教授) and various scholars in the field who introduced the concept of 'comprehensive guidance model' of Prof. Norman Gysbers to the Chinese communities. Since then 生涯規劃 has become corresponding representation of the academic term career guidance. It is worth noticing that in 'career'

<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/51c9d18d-en.pdf?expires=1532529387&id=id&accname=quest&checksum=FF0610987D3EA2E15BD0B385CB1383A5>

is a keyword for its unique conceptualization as well as being a common language across the board. On the other hand, no matter what Chinese translation different regions take, 生涯 is the legitimate interpretation; it is not replaced as 生命. Regrettably, the root of the academic development of this field was not taken into full consideration and now the terminology (English version) of 生涯規劃 faces another round of challenge. In response to the common misconception and critique towards “planning as a rigid tracking”, HKACMGM has been fighting hard to preserve and promote the true content of CLP in Hong Kong, and to educate the public about this. It would be regretful if EDB took the lead to make such a change, inviting more misinterpretation the policy.

The essence of Career Guidance

Career guidance is much more than a remedial service or support programme, in broad sense it is an essential component of school curriculum -- planned experienced with educational purposes. Considering the conceptualization of career guidance in various developed education systems, CLP has its' role and unique features regarded as a promising independent component in education system with well-defined concepts, scope of services (including curriculum, formal and informal), required learning outcomes, professional standards expected on practitioners, and differentiation from other student support/development dimensions.

HKACMGM holds the same belief that quality education should provide students space and create opportunities to explore the world so as to understand themselves, understand the world, unleash their potentials and prepare themselves to their further study and the working world. That is why we view that Career guidance and counseling to them is important. Long before, we have already advocated that career guidance and counseling in secondary schools should not be done only in the years (such as F.3 students making decision for their senior secondary electives, F.5 & F.7 students choosing their career pathways) of transition. Career education has to be started as early as junior secondary for the reason that students have to be taught the value, attitude, skills and knowledge (VASK) for career decision making. Somehow, these VASK are essential for students to take in charge their life and deal with the challenges that they may face in different transitions in their entire life.

HKACMGM's opposition against mixing up CLP with LE and VE

We strongly oppose “mixing” of fundamental and empirically different concepts, including “Values Education”, “Life Education”, “life Planning Education” ...etc to be used interchangeably NOR having career and life planning “subsumed” under “life education”.

Some educators define Values education (VE) as an introduction into values and morality for the purpose of equipping young people to relate to other people in harmonized, righteous and justice way. Some suggest that VE, in its various forms, encourages reflection on choices, exploration of opportunities and commitment to responsibilities, and for the individual in society, to develop values preferences and an orientation to guide attitudes and behavior. VE is also essential for school to inculcate youngsters' positive characters. However, the purposes and learning outcomes of VE is different from career guidance.

For Life Education (LE) is an encompassing concept of moral education, civic education and national education. It is suggested to focus on four areas understanding life, appreciate life, respect life and exploring the meaning of life. There is even no curriculum and suggested framework. Only piecemeal examples are listed by EDB. We also find that there is no such research and literature mention about “Life Planning Education” as it used in the paper of the task force.

We opine that the terms using correctly are prerequisite for the review of the school curriculum. They represent not only the common language that the world educators, researchers and professional counselors are using but also the understanding of these disciplinary of reviewers.

Conclusion

All in all, judging from the global understanding of CLP/career guidance, which is widely accepted as a professional domain in counselling, a change of the term to “life education” is deemed as an ill-advised move indeed. The semantic confusion caused will not only pose harm to the advocacy of the already-well-developed concept in society but also the academic exchange among educationalists in the field with specialists from other countries. If the change is in effect in due course, Hong Kong will be out of sync in the context if not an object of ridicule.

HKACMGM is ready and more than willing to continue coworking with CDI to actualize the learning goal on fostering development of career aspirations of the young generation. Should there be a need to elaborate any point presented in this response paper, do not hesitate to contact Mr. Joseph Tsang, Chairperson of HKACMGM (cttsang@gmail.com), and Dr. Esther Ho, Vice-chairperson of HKACMGM (hoyukfan@gmail.com).

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