

Chapter 1: Reviewing Career Guidance and Career Education in Hong Kong

1 Background – Context of the Project

The Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters (HKACMGM), with the support of Life-wide Learning and Library Section, Curriculum Development Institute, Education Bureau, has the privilege to initiate the project “Preparing Students for NSS from a Career Development Perspective” (the Project). Based on extensive review on theoretical materials and empirical evidence, this paper provides a substantial argument on “Why”, “What” and “How” of developing career education in secondary schools, and its integral role in the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, and more importantly, whole-person development of students, that prepares our young generation for the knowledge society. Systemic analysis of career education in local context will also be reviewed, followed by recommendations for policy makers and school educators in response to strengths and weaknesses or limitations identified in our school system.

1.1 Objectives of the Partnership Project

Career education or career guidance is going to play a role with the implementation of NSS. Considering the complexity and flexibility of subjects to be chosen by a senior secondary students, the inclusion of Applied Learning courses (formerly called “Career-oriented Studies”) and career-related experience as part of the essential Other Learning Experience “OLE” for senior secondary students, the heightening expectation of parents and students towards studying opportunities in tertiary institutions, as well as the need to construct Student Learning Profile (SLP), we can imagine how the role and functions of career teachers will be enhanced. As stated in the policy paper, *Action for the Future – Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools*; para. 4.16, “Career guidance is not simply a service **but an integral part of the NSS curriculum**. Students experience personal growth by acquiring knowledge about themselves, and by developing skills that help them identify and manage their careers.”

On the one hand, career guidance and/or education should be expanded to students of various academic capabilities to meet their needs; on the other hand, career guidance and/or education should no longer be restricted to a “problem-solving” -- traditional but out-dated paradigm, it should extend its impact towards secondary schools students through a developmental perspective, which prepares students for making critical career decisions at various stages of their study and career development.

“**Preparing students for NSS from a career development perspective**” is a project conducted by HKACMGM with a clear mission to contribute towards the development of career education and/or guidance for senior secondary school students in the NSS. The objectives of the proposal are as follows:

- To **review career education/guidance** in local context
- To **formulate a framework of career-related experience** for senior secondary level, with components meeting the needs of students with respect to career development and maturity required by the local NSS.
- To **produce deliverables** that disseminate key findings and outputs of the various types of research/programmes initiated by the Partnership Project.
- To **offer professional development training programs** for local career teachers in relation to the new roles and functions they are to take under the NSS. Workshops, which offer in-depth discussion and learning, are preferable.

2 Conceptualization of career education in local context

2.1 Connecting Career-related Experience to Career education, Career Guidance and Career Counselling

Vocational guidance and education have a long history in education. They emerged together in the late 1800s, in response to the need of many Western countries when they became industrialized nations (Herr and Cramer, 1996). The movement was clearly as a “problem-solving” or “treatment” approach, aiming at rational distribution of labour in a growing market of occupational opportunities that required more complicated skills. Vocational education mainly deals with training young people with occupational-specific skills, while the guidance approach emphasized the provision of occupational information. Usually, the approaches being used were directive and advice giving in nature, with limited reference to the individual needs or assessment. Gradually, the concept changes in a way that stresses an educative approach that tries to facilitate, maximize the growth of young people, i.e., a career model. **Career is a process of a life-span** (Herr, Cramer, 1996), meaning managing one’s personal potential in the most beneficial and satisfying way *throughout the life through a series of jobs*. A well-selected career will utilize one’s potential fully and achieve one’s life goals satisfactorily.

“Career Education” gains attention in Western countries since the early 70s, when the world was experiencing an economic crisis. The focus is no longer on occupational-special skills, instead it is a growing move to develop personally competent people in a broader sense, i.e., a call for reform in the education system

that could equip young people with not only vocational skills, but also self-understanding, decision making skills and working attitude required in the school-to-work transition. By definition, career education refers to the “*totality of experiences by which persons acquire knowledge and attitudes about self and work and the skills by which to identify, choose, plan, and prepare for work and other life options potentially constituting a career; an effort aimed at refocusing education and the actions of the boarder community in ways that will help individuals acquire and utilize the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for each to make work a meaningful, productive, and satisfying part of his or her way of life.*” (Herr and Cramer, 1996)

“Career education” should thus be differentiated from career counseling or guidance conceptually, despite the fact that the later two are integral components of the “totality of experiences”. Counseling is *a process of human interaction and relationship*, while guidance, as a broader concept, refers to the *systematic programs organized by counselors*. For career education, it is a component in the school curriculum, at the same time integrating efforts of the administrative, business and educational sectors.

Actualization of the curriculum reforms offers a need and an opportunity to re-instate significance of career education in secondary school education. Career-related experience, despite its identity as one of the five essential OLEs, has its significance and roles in whole-person development yet to be explored and defined. The internet resource developed by the CDI and HKEdCity enlists the objectives, resources, suggestions and exemplars of career related experience¹. Accordingly, the objectives of implementing career-related experiences are:

- Building up understanding to the world of work
- Understanding work ethics of various occupations
- Providing job-related knowledge and training

In the light of missions underpinning “career education” for ALL and from a developmental perspective, there is a need to strengthen guidance and counseling, students’ ownership and the orientation of **understanding self**, as well as **promoting critical reflection** towards relationship between individuals and workplace.²

¹ Refer to website on career-related experience managed by CDI:

http://cd1.edb.hkedcity.net/cd/lwl/CRE_WEB/01_intro_02.htm ; and the website on OLE:

http://cd1.edb.hkedcity.net/cd/lwl/ole/01_intro_01.asp. Both available in Chinese language only.

² See also Life-wide Learning and Library Section, Curriculum Development Institute, Education Bureau (2007). “*Other Learning Experiences*”: *What is it about?*. Hong Kong.

Career-related experiences should be a member under the umbrella of career education, encompassing educational experiences planned by schools to engage students in active reflection upon their own selves, their career choices, acquisition of life skills, exploration of life and career missions, and progressive process of individual career planning, including review of their student learning profiles. Career-related experiences can have their targets ranging from the general mass of students to individuals who need intensive guidance support from career counselors.

In short, career-related experience is *part of the essential curriculum aiming at promotion of students' growth and career maturity; expected outcome of this curriculum, whether through formal or informal channels, is to develop students' readiness to find and decide their life missions through the academic and occupational ladders.*

In Brief: Career Education/ Guidance Program

- An effective and relevant context of actualizing educational objectives in relation to
- Psychosocial development at individual level
- Setting achievable goals in academic and career path
- Working as a mediating factor of educating the youth as workforce with high competitiveness and employability

2.2 Principles of Career Education in Secondary Schools – Generic Skills

Levin (1997, cited in Leung, 1999) identifies 12 competency areas needed in a highly productive workforce that can be classified in four categories: interpersonal and collaboration skills, systematic problem solving skills, self-enhancement skills. These are the transferable or generic skills for wide variety of occupations or even lifelong career. In Leung's (1999) view, career interventions are ways for transforming these competencies into students' learning in a local educational system that puts too much emphasis on academic achievements. A few principles of career intervention in secondary school level are suggested:

- Encourage students to persist in their pursuit of career goals
- Art or Science: making informed decisions
- Assist students to achieve a better self-understanding
- Develop decision making skills
- Acquire knowledge about the world of work
- Acquisition of job search skills

Hughes (1999) identifies three needs of youth that are useful for shaping the directions for reform in secondary education: (1) Attaining maturity for the youth during their transition process; (2) Economic needs – the preparation for employment; and (3) Social needs – participation and citizenship. These three needs should be considered as a whole and by no means be put in conflict grounds. Citing the words of Hughes, *“Young people need to feel that they are a valued part of society and that they have a genuine and important part in its future. In building such an involvement, gaining productive work plays a key role. Employment is not only a means to economic independence but becomes wider symbol of the person’s perceived value.”* Career education should be one of the essential components in students’ learning experience.

3 Systemic analysis of implementing career education in Hong Kong

3.1 Analysis in a Systemic Context

In 1959, the Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters (renamed as the Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters in the 80s) was founded with the support of the Education Department and Labour Department, and that signified the starting point of the development of career guidance in Hong Kong. Secondary schools, since then, have specialized personnel responsible for provision of career guidance services. Progressively the “committee-based” system in schools gains shape. There are careers and further studies committee, guidance committee, disciplinary committee, and later on, life-education committee and even community services committee. In many schools, these committees enjoy division of labour in provision of services and coordination among them has been sought through a diversity of mechanism. Some schools have them subsumed under the Student Development/Service umbrella, supervised by a vice-principal; while in some schools these committees have regular meetings together to facilitate information dissemination and collaboration. Few people would deny that in Hong Kong’s schooling system, pastoral care is one of the laudable aspects of education, though there are other contributing factors other than the effective “committee-based” system.

Currently we have a special section in government structure (Career Guidance Services Section) responsible for supporting schools in this regard; every local secondary school has a career guidance committee; a number of localized assessment tools have been developed by the Labour Department and various intellectuals in tertiary institutes; career masters or teachers can equip themselves through a 100-hour certificate course; the mass media has ever-increasing interest in distributing

information related to further studies and career opportunities. Nevertheless, support to school career guidance service needs to be stepped-up. The current situation can be revealed in the “loosely-coupled” model as shown below:

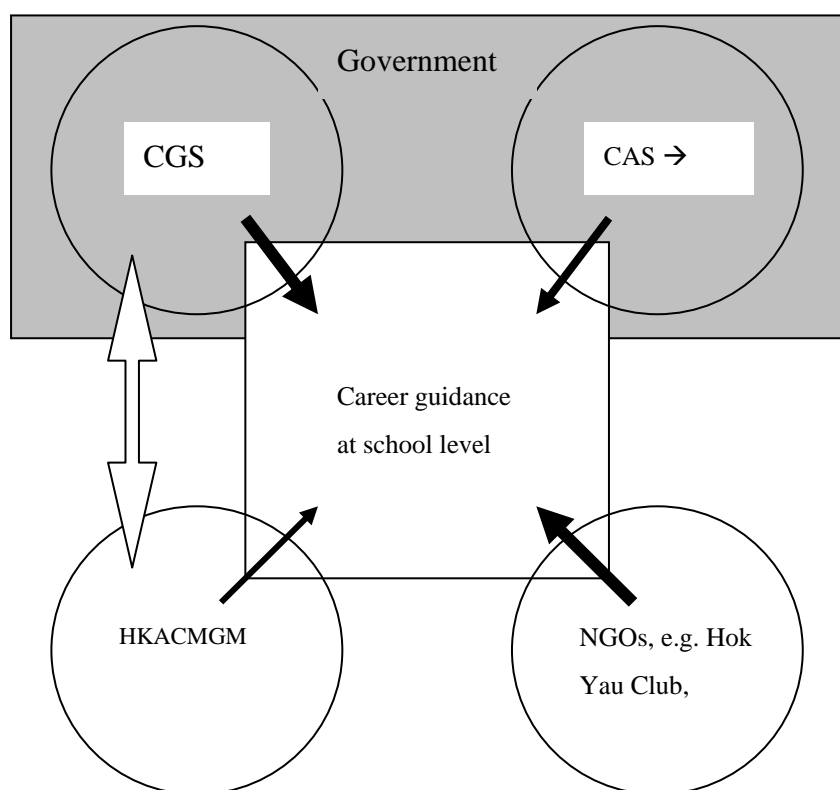


Figure 3: Loosely coupled career guidance service model

CGS: Career Guidance Services and Home-School Cooperation Section of the Education Bureau

CAS: Career Advisory Section of the Labour Department

YES: Youth Employment Start of the Labour Department

Support of the career guidance service comes from four different sectors, the Education Bureau, the Labour Department, NGOs (e.g., Hok Yau Club) and a professional organization (HKACMGM). In 2008, the Career Advisory Section is replaced by Youth Employment Start. The YES provides an innovative service mode because young people can enroll as members of the two employment service centres, and are given face-to-face career guidance or employment support. Nevertheless, support services given to students in secondary schools through liaison with career teachers, including school talks and thematic exhibition, are in transition but the effectiveness has yet to be explored. Coordination within the system is to be strengthened.

3.2 Other empirical evidences

From macro perspective of comparative studies:

A comparative study done by Patton and Burton (1996) between career masters in Hong Kong and Australia pointed out that 60% of career masters in Hong Kong are untrained in 1996, and generally career masters in Hong Kong have inadequate training before taking the role. Zhang (1998) conducted another comparative study of career guidance in Shanghai, Edinburgh and Hong Kong. In each of the cities there is a different way of career guidance development as a result of the special sociopolitical context. In terms of the content of career guidance services, Hong Kong lags behind the other two cities in lacking a comprehensive policy on career guidance proposed by the administrative authority. Borrowing the conclusion from Zhang's comparative study of career guidance in Shanghai, Edinburgh and Hong Kong, "... careers guidance still uses the old traditional methods. Very few studies have been done to explore careers guidance theories and model, or test out school careers guidance practice in the context of Hong Kong. It is doubtful whether the traditional methods of career guidance can be used effectively in the 1990s" (Zhang, 1998). Ten years after the study, comment from Zhang still applies.

From the role and functions of career teachers:

At school level, school administrators and quite a large number of teachers consider career guidance merely a "problem-solving" or remedial service given to students when students take a leap to the next stage of study or when they become drop-outs from schools. The essence of career education, which stresses experiential learning and developmental approach, has been neglected. Promotion of career planning at individual level is rarely actualized.

In the trend of changing economic circumstances and shifts in education policy, the role of career masters is increasingly important. The role of career masters in school has shifted from the traditional information-giving role to a developmental role (Li, 2007). However, Leung (1999, 2002) commented the guidance services in Hong Kong are fragmented and superficial, with the over-reliance of large scale programs including career talks and visits. Individual career guidance services such as career counselling are uncommon. The main constraints faced by local career masters are the lack of time and resources (Leung, 1999, 2002). The problems emerged because most career masters in schools are full-time teachers. Career masters are mostly occupied with the teaching tasks so there is not enough time for them to carry out career guidance services. Limitation of time and training made individual counselling and

follow-up services unavailable to students. Further, resources such as updated information booklets, career guidance room, and career testing instruments are limited for some schools, and this reduced the quality of career guidance. There are complaints about the lack of career guidance staff in schools. In most cases one or two career masters are responsible for the guidance work of the whole school. The shortage in staff explains the phenomenon as Leung (1999, 2002) described that career masters often use large scale programs rather than individual guidance.

Career masters in Hong Kong play several roles in school. They have the integrated and collocated role as educator, coordinator, consultant, counsellor, and information officer (Li, 2007). As mentioned earlier in this session, there is a paradigm shift in the roles of career masters. Career masters today are required to be outreaching, student-centred, and aiding the students for their holistic development. These tasks are in high contrast with the traditional role of passive, information giving style of career guidance. Local career masters and teachers often stress academic advancement of students. Information about post-secondary studies is commonly used in career guidance, but little information about the current work environment is provided to students (HKYWCA, 2003).

In contrary to the criticisms above, Li (2007) argued that local career masters are keen on developing the career guidance services in local schools. The study of Li shows that all career masters and principals who participated in the research considered the provision of career guidance essential and would like to devote more time to career guidance. Given adequate resources and support from the government, senior management and principals, the quality of career guidance service can be improved.

On students' needs:

A local survey done by Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council (2005) on occupational preference and values of secondary school students have suggested that secondary five students, who are going to take the HKCEE public exam, have little concept of career planning. The survey showed that 95% of the local secondary five students who took part in the survey have not heard of career planning, and only 56.6% of those students replied they may plan for their career. Zhang (1998) suggests that 89.3% of local students appeared to need more career guidance.

The idea of career planning is suggested to be integrated to the secondary school curriculum as early as possible (Leung, 2002; Li, 2007). Most local schools allocate resources and guidance services to secondary five and seven students. It is because

teachers and principals perceive students at these levels are going to make decisions about their career (HKYWCA, 2003). Indeed, career guidance is needed in earlier stages so that students may have more time and higher degree of control for their career choices. In Hong Kong, 41.46% of the secondary five students wanted to receive guidance in career planning in secondary four (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 2000).

3.3 Opportunities of Promoting Career Education in Schools

Systemically career education and guidance service in school is demonstrating a deficient model at both “policy” and “structural” levels. There was no coherent policy to set the direction and to define the role of career education or guidance in schools. Careers teachers face various challenges but with limited resources. Many students find their needs in career and life planning unfulfilled.

Despite these problems, the arrival of the Education Reforms signifies both a threat and an opportunity for development of career education in local context. “Learning for Life, Learning through Life: Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong” (Education Commission, 2000), which lay out the roadmap of education reforms for the subsequent decade, is the first policy document that explicitly relates schooling to work in explicit terms.

Objectives of senior secondary education is restated —“ *to enable students to have a balanced and comprehensive learning experience in academic, **vocational**, organizational, social service as well as the arts and sports domains to **prepare them for learning and for life***” (p.32)

Curriculum reform is also requested with respect to the objectives stated above — when students are at senior secondary level, “*Compared with basic education, senior education should provide students with more work-related experiences, enhance their knowledge about the working life, help them develop positive attitudes towards work, and help them explore their own aptitudes and abilities to prepare them for future employment*” (p.100, emphasis added by the author)

There has been a call for reform in our education system to change in order to promote “competitiveness” and “employability” of the young people, and thus the future local economy. It is through connection between school and business the gap between the two can be bridged, and thus students get more acquainted to skills and

attitudes they are expected to demonstrate in workplace – they become more adaptive. In fact, it is a worldwide trend.

Despite this, a critical mind always ready for debate and review, complemented by substantial educational belief with sound missions, is the essence to ensure betterment of our next generation through education. In brief, educators need to inform the public, including teachers, students and parents, the possible drawback of emphasizing an instrumental view of school-to-work movement, avoiding the negative impact of social control due to over-domination of the business world ethics. We need to actualize the positive impact of career education, i.e., **enriching learning experience of ALL students, not just a minority, so that they are able to obtain a higher standard of occupational proficiency and enter careers that are productive, rewarding and interesting.**

In the Education Reforms, there have been several blooming measures in relation to career education in secondary schools: Applied Learning curriculum stresses authentic occupational experience; Other Learning Experiences and Student Learning Profile require individual planning and reflective account of various learning experiences; Business-School Partnership Program provides opportunities for short-term job shadowing and career visits, which are also part of career-related experience. To variable extent, these initiatives have shared connectedness to career education yet there is little evidence that at implementation level they are integrated or well coordinated. Nevertheless, the HKACMGM regards implementation of these initiatives an opportunity to arouse attention of the stake-holders of education (students, parents, and educators) towards the significance of promoting career education and the need to strengthen support and coordination of career guidance beyond school level. Changes from the 3-2-2-3 to 3-3-4 secondary-to-university study mode and related issues (such as the requirement to produce a personalized SLP) in progression paths create heightening needs of students and parents on career and life planning on individual level. Career education and guidance has a definite role to play in the process. Improvement in career education or guidance, however, requires concerted effort of different parties, including the “loosely-coupled” government sections involved, professional bodies, and front-line educators, to invest resources, to develop guidance curriculum, to promote and support career-related experiences in school.

4 Recommendations

Few would deny the need to develop career education in schools, given the awareness of increasing complexity of economic context, the changing requirement for human capital, and the heightening expectation of parents and students in pursuit of higher qualifications. Despite the needs and presence of new opportunities, there are challenges we must face and difficulties to be overcome to make career education a success:

4.1 About the system:

- Formulation of policy on career education that clearly defines its **values** (career education should not be restrictive or functionalistic, it should be a kind of compensatory education, with a humanistic orientation) and **roles** in the holistic development of students (for instance, the need to develop individual planning), the roles, duties of personnel and **resources** to be available.
- Delineation of roles and duties of various sections under Education Bureau that have schemes or projects or services related to career education and guidance. **Integration** and **coordination** between these departments are necessary.
- Provision of **support** in relation to educational research, professional development programs, curriculum exemplars and most importantly networking of community resources that complement school educational activities and programs. The Education Bureau should have a more active, leading and coordinating role to play.

4.2 About the substance of career education:

- Career guidance and education inevitably involves socializing students with respect to the changes in the capitalistic society, such that students can really adapt better in the world of work. For instance, etiquette education and teaching of job-search skills for students from lower socio-economic background (i.e., with less social and cultural capital) can promote their self-concept (Utilitarian perspective), but excessive and mis-educational fabrications should be avoided.
- From the humanistic perspective on youth psychological development, students in different school contexts and backgrounds have their specific needs in career development. Resources should be allocated to *all* students under this belief, but distribution of resources need not be a simple egalitarian mode. Compensatory resources should be allocated to the least advantaged, but their exposure should not be restricted to a few vocational choices. Consensus

among schools, NGOs and employers should be made. Their cooperation is still highly valued.

- In order to eliminate a purely functionalistic view in career planning among students, career counselling and education should be started in early stage in secondary education, long before students are kept reminded to consider collecting their capital for further studies such as JUPAS application.

4.3 Suggestions for successful implementation of career education in secondary school

Empirical studies on career education reveal its effectiveness in fostering students' development in self-awareness, opportunity awareness, career decision making skills, specification of career goals (Blacher, 1998) and even moderate improvement in academic performance (Evans & Burck, 1992).

Individual counselling is suggested to be promoted in school provided for all students (Leung, 2002). In a counselling environment students are encouraged to reflect and gain insight of their career preferences, interests and abilities. The idea of self-actualisation and the concepts of career planning are suggested to be introduced to students (Leung, Wong, Li, & Lam, 2002). By reaching a better self-understanding, the students may identify their career goal. Career guidance should not only focus on academic advancement, but on holistic development and increasing awareness about the current workplace.

Self-directed career interest inventories are suggested to be an effective tool for students to increase self-understanding. Inventories such as Self-Directed Search are valid measure of careers interest to Hong Kong students (Li, 2007).

4.4 Transition of the roles of career professionals in schools

Li (2007), identified five key roles of career teachers – role as careers information officer (to collect, update and disseminate related information), role as educator (to initiate programs and curriculum, and to organize staff development sessions), role as career counsellor (to provide individual and group counselling), role as careers consultant (to advise students knowledge and attitude towards work), role as coordinator (to liaise with various stakeholders or personnel). Self-responded data reveals the 100 career teachers regarded the role as career information officer (especially on collection and dissemination of information) most important (“should do”) and had spent the largest share of time (“actually do”) on this aspect.

It is noteworthy, however, that teachers didn't rank formulation and implementation of a career curriculum high, i.e., they didn't find that important and were just not unenthusiastic to invest their effort and time in it. This finding, based on research done in 2000-2001, is nevertheless alarming with respect to our assertion that presence of a curriculum with developmental focus, should be the basis of a successful career education. Career counsellors in school should demonstrate an expertise in management of the fast-changing career information. But definitely that's only the operational or instrumental element of an influential career guidance service. Our mission to promote career education and whole-school guidance for all students requires much more aggressive and proactive strategies we have discussed before; mere collection and provision of information in an impersonal career corner never suffices developmental objectives nor is able to meet the needs of individual students related to education and career planning.

In Brief: Traditional → Emerging New Roles to facilitate Career Education
Problem-solving model → Developmental model
Resource provision model → Curriculum development and implementation
Fragmented/ Independent service → Coordination and educational leadership
Whole-school participation → Interdependence and collaboration

5 Implications on the career education curriculum and the framework on career-related experience for secondary school students

The working team of the Partnership Project had been inspired by the Comprehensive Guidance Program developed by Prof. Norman C. Gysbers in the US. Gysbers (2003) stresses the belief in the whole-person development of ALL students, which means guidance or educational experiences should be infiltrated in school life of the able students as well as those less-motivated ones. The mission of the program is *“to lead us to appreciate how important it is to help all of our students with their total development, to help them begin to get a sense of self, a sense of direction, focus, and purpose in their lives within the context of society in which they will live and work”* (Gysbers, 2003)

The program is an operational framework that highlights various components for whole-school student whole-person development coherently rather than a well-structured theory on guidance (Lau, 2007). Though Gysbers names the framework “guidance program”, its substance is curriculum-based. Clear delineation of program elements, including guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive

services and system support, are catered for to facilitate personal-social development, academic development and career development of students.

The advantage of integrating Gysbers' framework into our discussion on career education is that the former provides an empirically justified and sound operational model for reference by school educators in planning for career-related experiences or guidance programs. Comprehensive guidance program reminds us of the inter-relatedness between the three developmental aspects, the complementary roles of curriculum, individual planning and responsive services, and the need to get organizational alignment. These are all factors to be considered when schools want to envision success through OLE.

Local incentives to envision Comprehensive Guidance Program in local setting is not rare. A team of scholars (Yuen, 2003; Yuen et al., 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Shea, 2005; Lau, 2007) had developed a set of localized and empirically tested materials on life skills curriculum, including a whole section devoted to career development. Their contribution in formulation of group assessment tools for identification of students' needs should not be overlooked. Nevertheless, deliverables prepared by the Partnership Project have their unique and outstanding features.

One of the objectives of the Partnership Project is to develop resources that facilitate career education in school. Two most important deliverables include:

(1) An elaborated "Framework of Enhancing Career-related Experiences for Secondary School Students" which spells out the career education components in local context, with special reference made on issues concerned with career education in the New Senior Secondary system. An extensive resource list in line with the Framework is given in Chapter Four of this Handbook.

(2) Individual Student Planning Portfolios for S.1-3 and S.4-6 – practical and supporting tools for career and life planning for local students, at different critical stages of their secondary school life. Major components of the tools include understanding of self interest, personalities, career aspirations and aids of decision making. *One of the major strengths, however, is the unique and comprehensive information related to further studies and occupations through which students can make "informed choice" more easily.* This Handbook contains a teacher's guide on the S.1-3 ISP Tool 2008 edition.

As the first attempt in the territory to connect career education, career and life planning and career opportunities in LOCAL CONTEXT so intimately, it is expected

that the Framework and the two ISP Tools can become a useful platform for teachers to plan career education, to provide high-standard guidance service; and for students to realize their needs of career and life planning. This is, hopefully, a spark in further and sustainable development of career education in Hong Kong.

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