

教育新嘗試

Educational Innovation

*Development of a Positive Youth
Development Program in Hong Kong:
Project P.A.T.H.S (Positive Adolescent
Training Through Holistic Social
Programs)*

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This paper outlines the development of a positive youth development (PYD) program in Hong Kong. With reference to the adolescent developmental issues observed in Hong Kong, a positive youth development program with 2 tiers was designed. The Tier 1 Program is a universal positive youth development program for all students from Secondary 1 to Secondary 3. The Tier 2 Program is a selective program which targets adolescents with greater psychosocial needs. Programs in Tier 2 are developed by school social workers providing social work service in the schools. It was expected that Tier 1 and Tier 2 programs will strengthen positive youth development in the 15 positive youth development constructs identified in other successful PYD programs. Evaluation based on subjective outcome assessment, objective outcome assessment, qualitative evaluation and process evaluation will be carried out to examine the program effects.

Key words: positive youth development program, Chinese adolescents, youth development

Background of the Project

A survey of the literature shows that there are worrying trends and phenomena related to the development of adolescents in Hong Kong, such as mental health problems, abuse of psychotropic substances, suicide, school violence, and drop in family solidarity (Shek, in press, a; Shek & Lam, in press; Shek & Lee, in press). With reference to such trends and phenomena, one should ask how adolescent developmental problems can be prevented. In the context of school counselling and guidance, remedial counselling and guidance initiatives based on individual and group intervention methods are commonly employed. However, there are growing efforts to identify at-risk students at an early stage and to develop primary prevention programs that utilize the classroom-based curricular approach (Weissberg, Kumpfer, & Seligman, 2003).

Several issues should be considered when prevention of adolescent problem behaviour is in focus. First, if preventive programs are responses

to adolescent developmental problems, it means we need a huge number of separate preventive programs (e.g., prevention of bullying, substance abuse, gambling... etc.) and such programs will take up much time if they are implemented in the school context. Second, implementation of preventive programs would receive strong resistance from parents who might argue that their children do not have the problem behaviour (e.g., substance abuse). Finally, consistent with the beliefs that "problem free is not fully prepared" (Pittman, 1991) and that "young people are not problems to be solved but resources to be developed", it is important to consider how adolescents in Hong Kong can develop using a more positive approach. As such, positive youth development programs (i.e., programs that attempt to cultivate the potentials and skills of adolescents) are called for (Shek, *in press*, b).

However, research findings show that there are very few systematic and multi-year positive youth development programs in Hong Kong, particularly for the junior secondary school students. At present, primary schools are implementing the Comprehensive Guidance Program, thanks to the initiation of the HKSAR government dated back about 3 years ago in 2002. Although more than 90% of these schools provide education in personal development (Lee, 2005), the effects of the programs are still not clear considering their relatively short history. As for the secondary schools, the picture is even vaguer. Whereas most, if not all schools, attempt to implement development programmes in the adolescents, the programmes are usually conducted in the names of moral education, civic education, or life education, which may vary in form, content and depth. Moreover the existing programs may lack good coherence and logical continuation among the units and across the levels. In short, development programmes in Hong Kong usually deal with isolated problems and adolescent development issues only (i.e. deficits-oriented programs). They are relatively short-term in nature and lack systematic and long-term evaluation.

In view of these concerns and to promote holistic development in adolescents in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has invited academics of five local universities to form a Research Team with

The Chinese University of Hong Kong being the leading institution to develop a multi-year universal positive youth development program in the territory. Besides developing the program, the Research Team will also provide training for teachers and social workers and carry out longitudinal evaluation of the project.

Conceptualization of the Project

A review of the literature shows that several steps are involved in the development of positive youth development programs. According to Weissberg, Caplan, and Sivo (1989), there are five stages intrinsic in the developmental process for conceptualizing, designing, implementing and disseminating school-based social-competence promotion programs. The first stage, *conceptualization*, involves the identification of personal resources (such as knowledge, skills, and beliefs) and environmental supports and their combinations that promote social competence in specified domains and/or prevent mental health problems based on theories, research findings and intervention experiences. The second stage is *design*, in which developmentally and culturally appropriate programs that involve application of effective classroom teaching principles are devised. In such programs, replicable curricula that describe clearly the following areas are developed: (1) how students are taught the targeted personal resources, and (2) how real-life opportunities are found where the taught skills can be practiced and reinforced. The third stage is *implementation*, in which the program is adapted to the ecology of the school setting and that mechanisms are used to monitor the integrity of the program. The fourth stage is *evaluation*, in which researchers examine whether: (1) the program is implemented effectively, (2) the program improves the personal resources of the students, and (3) there are different combinations of personal and environmental factors that are related to the program's effectiveness. The fifth stage is *maintenance and dissemination*, in which issues of the sustainability of the program and its dissemination are considered. With reference to these stages, this paper

outlines the basic conceptualization as well as design of the P.A.T.H.S. Project.

According to Shek (in press, b), the conceptual framework of the P.A.T.H.S. Project is based on an integration of theories, models and research findings in the following areas: (a) literature on risk factors, protective factors and adolescent resilience; (b) literature on adolescent developmental assets; (c) deficits-based and assets-based models on adolescent development; (d) positive youth development constructs; (e) models on positive youth development programs; (f) ecological models; and (g) literature on adolescent development in Hong Kong.

Based on a review of western and local literature (e.g., Benson, 1997; Lerner & Benson, 2003; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004), the following assertions are maintained in the conceptual model underlying the proposed programs in this project:

- Adolescent developmental outcomes are determined by personal factors and environmental factors in different contexts (i.e., **ecological assertion**).
- Changes in adolescents and their developmental contexts would be necessary to promote positive youth development (i.e., **change assertion**).
- It is important to consider adolescent development in a holistic manner, including the physical, psychological, social and spiritual domains (i.e., **holistic assertion**).
- There are different developmental assets to be developed by adolescents which are conducive to positive youth development (i.e., **developmental assets assertion**).
- Risk factors in different ecological systems impair adolescent development (i.e., **risk factors assertion**).
- Protective factors in different ecological systems help adolescents to cope with the negative impact generated by the risk factors (i.e., **protective factors assertion**).
- Besides focusing on the reduction of youth problem behaviour (i.e.,

prevention-science approach targeting youth problems and deficits), emphasis should also be placed on developing the potentials in adolescents (i.e., **positive youth development assertion**).

- Based on an extensive literature review (e.g., Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002, 2004), there are constructs that promote positive youth development which are intrinsic to the successful positive youth development programs (i.e., **positive youth development constructs assertion**).
- The positive youth development approach and the prevention science approach are not in conflict and an integration of the two approaches would be beneficial (i.e., **integration assertion**).
- Existing theories, research findings and successful programs existing will be used to guide the conceptualization, design, implementation and evaluation of the project (i.e., **evidence-based assertion**).

In short, with reference to the adolescent developmental issues, the lack of school-based positive youth development programs for junior secondary schools in Hong Kong and the need to promote more positive adolescent development, it is appropriate to develop those constructs identified in the successful positive youth development programs in the literature.

Positive Youth Development Constructs

A survey of the literature shows that there are many intervention programs that utilize positive youth development constructs. For example, Guerra and Williams (2003) described a multi-year project in which an integrated health promotion and prevention program was developed, implemented and evaluated. In the project, five core competencies for healthy youth development were emphasized, which included positive identity (positive self-concept, hopefulness, and future goals), personal agency (self-efficacy, effective coping, locus of control, and attribution style), self-regulation (affective, behavioral, and cognitive self-regulation, and impulse control), social relationship skills (social problem-solving skills, empathy,

conflict resolution, and capacity for intimacy), and prosocial system of beliefs (attitudes, norms, values, and moral engagement).

Catalano et al. (2002) reviewed 77 programs on positive youth development. Their review showed that 25 programs were successful and 15 positive youth development constructs were identified in the successful programs. The 15 constructs included:

1. *Promotion of Bonding*: Promotion of bonding means to develop strong affective relationship with and commitment to people (healthy adults and positive peers) and institutions (school, community and culture).
2. *Promotion of Social Competence*: Social competence refers to interpersonal skills (such as communication, assertiveness, conflict resolution and interpersonal negotiation), ability to build up positive human relationship and provision of opportunities to practice such skills.
3. *Promotion of Emotional Competence*: Emotional competence includes the awareness of one's own emotions, the ability to understand others' emotions, the ability to use the vocabulary of emotion, the capacity for empathy, the ability to differentiate internal, subjective emotional experience from external, emotional expression, the capacity to control emotional distress, an awareness of emotional messages within relationships, and the capacity for emotional management.
4. *Promotion of Cognitive Competence*: Cognitive competence includes cognitive abilities, processes or outcomes (such as logical thinking, problem-solving, and goal-setting) and critical thinking abilities (such as making inferences, self-reflection and coordination of multiple views).
5. *Promotion of Behavioral Competence*: This positive youth development construct includes the ability to use verbal and nonverbal strategies to perform socially acceptable and normative behavior in social interactions and to make effective behavior choices.
6. *Promotion of Moral Competence*: Moral competence refers to the orientation to performing altruistic behavior, the ability to judge moral

issues, as well as the development of justice and altruistic behavior in adolescents.

7. *Development of Self-Efficacy*: Self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's ability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce targeted attainments as well as techniques to change negative self-defeating cognitions to positive ones.
8. *Fostering Prosocial Norms*: Prosocial norms are clear and healthy standards, beliefs, and behavior guidelines which promote prosocial behavior. Prosocial norms often include altruism, solidarity and volunteerism which lead to prosocial behaviors such as sharing and cooperation.
9. *Cultivation of Resilience*: Resilience can be conceived as a capacity (the ability of an individual for adapting to changes in a healthy way), a process (a reintegration process for an individual to recover from distress) or a result (positive outcomes after going through stressful events). As such, cultivation of resilience means fostering adolescents' capacity to confront developmental changes and life stresses so as to "bounce back" from stressful life experiences and achieve healthy outcomes.
10. *Cultivation of Self-Determination*: Self-determination refers to an adolescent's ability to set goals and make choices according to his/her own thinking. Skills and strategies which promote self-determination include self-awareness of one's strengths and limitations, goal-setting and action-planning, problem-solving, choice-making, and self-evaluation.
11. *Cultivation of Spirituality*: Cultivation of spirituality refers to the promotion of beliefs in a higher power or a sense of spiritual identity, meaning or practice.
12. *Promotion of Beliefs in the Future*: Beliefs in the future refers to hope and optimism, including valued and attainable goals, positive appraisal of one's capability and effort (a sense of confidence), and positive expectancies of the future.

13. *Development of Clear and Positive Identity:* This positive youth development construct refers to the building of self-esteem and the exploration and commitments in the process of self-definition.
14. *Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement:* This positive youth development construct refers to events and activities that promote young people's participation in prosocial behaviors and maintenance of prosocial norms.
15. *Recognition for Positive Behavior:* This construct refers to the development of systems for rewarding or recognizing participants' positive behavior such as prosocial behavior or positive changes in behavior.

The proposed programs in the P.A.T.H.S. Project will anchor around the above positive youth development constructs that have been found intrinsic to the existing successful positive youth development programs. It should be noted that these constructs have conventionally be treated as the intervention goals in the counselling and guidance contexts.

Basic Design of the Program

There are two tiers of programs (Tier 1 and Tier 2) in this project. The Tier 1 Program is a universal positive youth development program in which students in Secondary 1 to 3 will take part. There are 20 hours of training in both core and elective programs each school year for each grade. Because research findings suggest that roughly one-fifth of adolescents would need more help, the Tier 2 Program will be provided for at least one-fifth of the students who display greater psychosocial needs at each grade. The programs in both tiers can also be used in the counselling and guidance contexts of schools.

Tier 1 Program

The Tier 1 Program has several characteristics. First, the number of hours for each grade of the junior secondary school will be 20. There will

be core units of 10 hours and elective units of another 10 hours. For schools with special or extra needs, they may choose the core units only (i.e., 10 hours for the Tier 1 Program). In any case, the minimum number of hours of the Tier 1 Program in a school should be 10 hours. Second, as there are 40 units per grade (each lasting for 30 minutes), students will have completed a total of 120 units by the time they finish the three junior secondary school years. The units in the Program will be constructed with reference to the positive development constructs described earlier and identified in the successful programs (Catalano et al., 2002, 2004). Third, the Program will be developed by the Research Team by integrating existing research findings, programs, local adolescent needs, cultural characteristics and experiences gained from the Experimental Implementation Phase of the Project. Trial teaching for all units will be carried out. Fourth, relevant adolescent developmental concerns (e.g., drug issues, sexuality, financial management, sense of responsibility, life meaning) and adolescent developmental strengths (e.g., high level of concern for society and high proficiency in information technology) will be incorporated in the Program. To cater for the needs of different schools, different activities will be designed.

The fifth characteristic of the program is that its effectiveness will be maximized to the students. To achieve this, the Tier 1 Program will preferably be co-run by a teacher and a social worker. If this ideal cannot be attained, a teacher or a social worker can run the program on his/her own but preferably with the assistance of a helper. To facilitate implementation, the program is designed in such a way that one teacher or social worker can implement it without much difficulty under normal circumstances. In terms of qualifications, the social worker mainly responsible for implementing the Tier 1 Program should be a registered one, preferably with a university degree and at least two years of social work experience.

Finally, systematic and adequate training is another emphasis of the program. For each of the Secondary 1 to Secondary 3 programs, both teachers and social workers involved will receive 20 hours of training before the implementation. For the 2006–07 school year (i.e., first year in the Full

Implementation Phase), the training will take place from March 2006 to August 2006. For the 2007–08 school year (i.e., second year in the Full Implementation Phase), the training will take place from March 2007 to August 2007. For the 2008–09 school year (i.e., third year in the Full Implementation Phase), the training will take place from March 2008 to August 2008. Apart from these trainings, there will be a program that provides support for teachers in which teachers can join on a voluntary basis.

Principles of Design Behind the Tier 1 Program

Based on a literature review (Shek & Ma, in press), the following principles are maintained in designing the proposed Tier 1 Program.

- *Principle 1:* The Program is a comprehensive universal one that utilizes a wide range of positive youth development constructs that have been identified in other effective programs.
- *Principle 2:* Relevant theoretical models and research findings in both Western and Chinese contexts are used to guide the development of the Program.
- *Principle 3:* Holistic adolescent development in different domains (physical, psychological, social and spiritual domains) is focused upon.
- *Principle 4:* Both adolescent developmental assets and developmental problems (e.g., drug, sex, delinquent, violence, lifestyle, money spending and mental health issues) are considered in the process.
- *Principle 5:* The proposed Program content is developmentally appropriate.
- *Principle 6:* Relevant cultural elements are included in the program.
- *Principle 7:* Multi-year intervention programs rather than one-shot programs are designed.
- *Principle 8:* Proper and adequate training is planned for the teachers and social workers who will implement the programs.

- *Principle 9:* Relevant teaching strategies and methods (e.g., peers learning to demonstrate skills and change norms) are used to maximize the learning effects.
- *Principle 10:* Active participation and involvement of the students are emphasized.
- *Principle 11:* Besides classroom activities, programs outside the classroom are also developed.
- *Principle 12:* Generalization of the competence developed to real-life contexts is emphasized.
- *Principle 13:* Students are involved in the design of the program activities.
- *Principle 14:* Relevant issues (e.g., gender differences, school differences, and class differences) are considered.
- *Principle 15:* Besides changing the students, attempts that change the families (e.g., encouraging parental involvement) and schools (e.g., school improvement and reorganization initiatives included) are included.
- *Principle 16:* Ongoing evaluation at all stages is carried out.

Tier 2 Program

There are several characteristics of the Tier 2 Program (Selective Program). First, it targets adolescents who are identified in the Tier 1 Program and/or via other sources to have greater psychosocial needs. It is recommended that information based on multiple sources, including objective assessment tools (e.g., Family Assessment Instrument, Life Satisfaction Scale, Hong Kong Student Information Form), teachers' ratings, student records and other relevant quantitative and qualitative information based on systematic assessment be used to identify students for the Tier 2 Program. Second, it is suggested that particular attention should be paid to students with special needs in the academic, personal (e.g., adjustment, mental health and value concerns), interpersonal and family domains. Generally speaking, at least one-fifth of the adolescents and/or their parents

in the Tier 1 Program are expected to participate in the Tier 2 Program. However, under some special circumstances (e.g., when students have value confusions in material possessions and difficulty in financial management), Tier 2 Program that targets more than one-fifth of the students at each grade could be designed within the available financial resources.

Third, NGOs have the choice of designing appropriate programs that target the needs of the students and/or their families who are identified as having special needs in the Tier 1 Program and thus eligible to receiving services based on the Tier 2 Program. The NGO applicants can design programs that meet the needs of the students with reference to the positive youth development constructs, as well as goals and objectives covered in this project. Several non-mutually exclusive examples for the Tier 2 Program include: (a) mentorship programs that involve the alumni of the school, (b) mental-health promotion programs, (c) adventure-based counselling, (d) parenting program, (e) service-learning programs, and (f) resilience-enhancement programs.

Fourth, NGOs will be invited to develop the Tier 2 Program with reference to the needs of the students and the positive youth development constructs stated above. The proposals will be considered by the Social Welfare Department with the assistance of the Research Team. So far, two sample proposals have been prepared by the Research Team. In order to apply for the development of the Program, applicants are required to write a brief proposal of no more than 5 pages (excluding references) that target students with greater psychosocial needs identified during the Tier 1 Program and through other sources.

Finally, applicants have the choice of designing appropriate programs that meet the specific needs of the students. Nonetheless, the program objectives should be in line with the positive youth development constructs, and goals and objectives stated in this project. In the proposal, applicants are expected to outline the project objectives, conceptual bases of the intervention model, rationale for using the model, and evidence supporting the effectiveness of the approach proposed.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Program evaluation has been part of teaching or social work practice. As such, those (e.g., teachers and social workers) who implement the programs should be required to evaluate them. For the Tier 1 Program, the NGOs are required to carry out subjective outcome evaluation after implementing the Program to all Secondary 1 students in the respective schools (i.e., the required output standard). The evaluation should be done by using the forms designed by the Research Team and include the following areas: (a) the participants' perceptions of the Program and the instructor(s)/worker(s), (b) the participants' evaluation of their changes after joining the program, and (c) the workers' evaluation of the program, their performance and perceived changes in the participants. Apart from the evaluation forms, the Research Team has also designed the computer programs for analysing the data, report templates and a sample report for use.

A longitudinal evaluation study will also be conducted in schools randomly sampled from the participating schools (i.e., randomized group trials). The participating students will be followed up for two years after the completion of the Full Implementation Phase (i.e., 2006 to 2011). The selected schools and the NGOs serving the schools are expected to provide assistance for the smooth implementation of the evaluation. For the control schools randomly selected from the participating schools, the Full Implementation Phase will start from 2007–08 to 2009–10 and the Secondary 1 students in 2006–07 will be recruited as control participants.

Based on the principle of triangulation, it is argued that multiple evaluation strategies will be used to examine the program effects. Therefore, besides subjective and objective outcome evaluation, process evaluation will be carried out to identify those process variables (e.g., teacher, student, and organizational characteristics) that affect the outcomes. In addition, qualitative evaluation based on in-depth interviews and focus groups will be carried out to examine the subjective experiences of the stakeholders regarding the Project.

To evaluate the Tier 2 Program, the NGOs are first required to lay down in the proposal the format of programs to be organised, the number of service targets, the number of programs and sessions to be delivered (i.e., the required output standards). In addition to the above output requirements, the NGOs are required to conduct subjective outcome evaluation based on the forms designed by the Research Team. Besides, the agencies are encouraged to design additional evaluation mechanisms to evaluate the Program. Similar to the Tier 1 Program, the Research Team has designed a standardized subjective outcome evaluation form, data analysis form, report form and a sample report. Further details of the evaluation of the Project could be seen in Shek and Siu (in press).

In conclusion, the P.A.T.H.S. Project is a positive youth development program that attempts to promote positive development in adolescents via the strengthening of the 15 positive youth development constructs covered in the Tier 1 and Tier 2 Programs. Based on the principle of triangulation, the effectiveness of the project will be assessed by several strategies, including subjective outcome evaluation, objective outcome evaluation, qualitative evaluation and process evaluation. As the first large-scale positive youth development program in Hong Kong, it is hoped that the experiences gained could provide some pointers for future implementation of similar programs by counselling and guidance teachers in the school context.

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在香港建立青少年正面發展計畫：「共創成長路」計畫

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摘要

本文論述在香港建立一個「青少年正面發展計畫」的概況。針對香港青少年的發展需要，「共創成長路」計畫透過兩層的培育活動，提升青少年的正面發展。第一層培育活動是為全港中一至中三學生而設的全面性青少年正面成長培育活動，學生每學年參與合共10至20小時的課程。第二層培育活動則針對那些社會心理需要較大的學生及其家長，活動內容由申請機構社工建議及提供。本計畫的檢討方法包括客觀成效檢討、主觀成效檢討、質性檢討及過程檢討。

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