



Career Development and Life Planning Education from a Holistic Perspective

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1. Introduction

The world is changing, the workforce demand is increasing, and the structure of knowledge is developing. With the rapid evolution of globalization and technology, the society has put forward higher requirements on people's soft skills or 21st century skills. This calls for a comprehensive career development education in schools to foster students' self-understanding of their values, interests and abilities, as well as decision-making skills, so that they could make wise career choices. Influenced by western career education theories in recent years (Tien, et al., 2016), in Chinese societies, the ideology and conceptualization of career education

or career guidance has been broadened to the level of life planning education, which focuses more on pursuing life-long learning abilities and a holistic meaning of life or work (EDB, 2014; Tien, et al., 2016; Leong, 2016; Lee, et al., 2018). This essay aims to introduce and analyze the concept and scopes of career development and life planning education from the perspective of holistic education; furthermore, this essays addresses some suggestions and challenges about the implementation of life planning education in schools for Chinese societies.

2. Career Development and Life Planning Education

“Career” can be defined as the sum of different roles in an individual's lifespan (Zunker, 2002), and “career development” refers to a lifelong process of developing and cultivating one's values, skills, interests, personal characteristics, and the knowledge of the world of work (Tolbert, 1980). Historically, the focus on career development education and its terminologies underwent several stages. Ueno (2003) assumed career education had a strong relationship with vocational guidance, job preparation and selection. In Chinese societies, especially in mainland China, career guidance also experienced four stages, transforming from job allocation, vocational guidance, career education, to the current state of career counseling. This evolves from social human resource-oriented to individual developmental need-driven (Zhou, et al., 2016).

Some experts (Herr, 1996; Super, 1980) began to acknowledge the inter-related processes between career planning and life development, recognizing career development as an integral part of an individual's development in life span. Super's life roles theory (1980) indicated that each

person should coordinate and tackle multiple roles, e.g., worker, parent, son, citizen, in the lifetime when interacting with others. From this perspective, career developmental goals are supposed to be consistent with life goals (Leung, 1999), thus, the core of career education changes from “charting a career path” to “championing a meaningful work life” (Fan & Leong, 2016), which is closely aligned with life planning education.

The conceptualization of life planning education differs based on contexts. Ueno (2003) summarized that life planning education is the experience that facilitates the development of career and life goals and choices, constructed from three scopes, i.e. career-oriented, sex and home economics (work and family life). In May 2014, the Education Bureau of Hong Kong (EDB) proposed a “Guide on life planning education and career guidance for secondary schools” (The Guide hereafter) as foundation to foster schools' capacity of better developing secondary students' life-long learning abilities. Life planning is a measure of self-actualization rather than a tool to solve problems of personal life and social structure (Lee, et al., 2017). Lee

et al. (2018) associated life planning with “post-school transition”, pointing out that it needs not only to consider cognitive lifelong learning skills but also to involve psychological and emotional development, taking holistic education into consideration.

3. Holistic Career and Life Planning Education

Holistic education, originated from western academics, encompasses a wide range of theories and worldviews about philosophy, psychology, religions and curriculum (Forbes & Martin, 2004). Based on western theories, Wong, et al. (2016) proposed a new framework of holistic education in the Chinese context as shown in Figure 1.

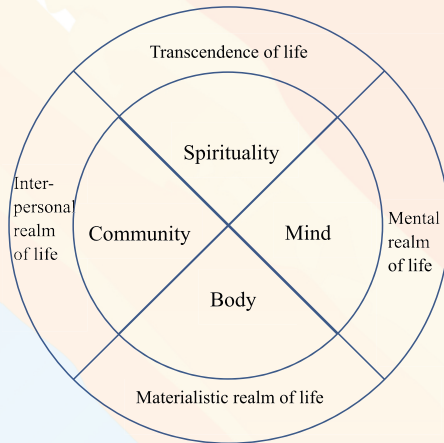


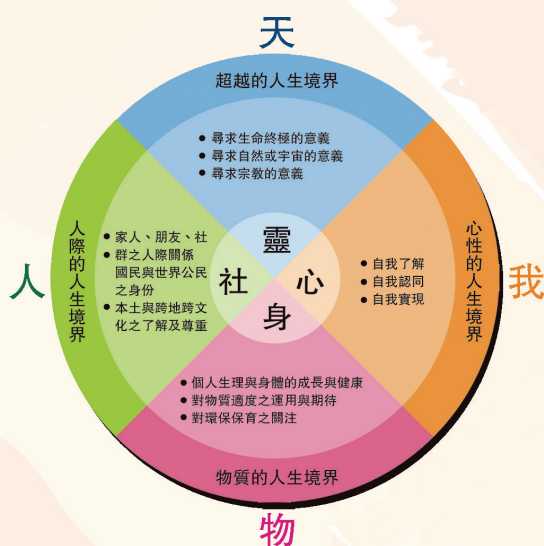
Figure 1: Framework of Holistic Education (Wong, et al., 2016)

The theoretical model assumes that holistic education or whole person development includes four elements: body (身), mind (心), community (社), spirituality (靈).

- “Body” refers to the materialistic realm of life which focuses on the physical development and skills of responding to the material universe;

- “Mind” is addressed for cultivating the psychological and affective values, and it suggests self-understanding and self-actualization;

- “Community” means interpersonal life towards people's surrounding world;



- “Spirituality” develops students’ transcendence so that they could seek their ultimate goals and meanings of life.

According to Lin (2001), the fulfillment of life needs a balanced development of the inter-relationship between these four elements, thus, a holistic education cannot ignore any element, which fosters the integration of body, mind, community and spirituality in an interactive circle.

Leong (2005) applied the ideology of holistic development to explaining life planning education, demonstrating that life planning is a comprehensive and holistic process of arranging an individual's whole life in a social environment. It includes several important aspects in life such as work, learning, interpersonal relationship and entertainment. He further proposed a pyramid model containing three levels of life planning education which are survival, self-esteem and self-actualization, as well as meaning and purpose (Figure 2).

Survival refers to cognitive skills of basic living, such as seeking jobs, managing finance and time. The upper level, self-

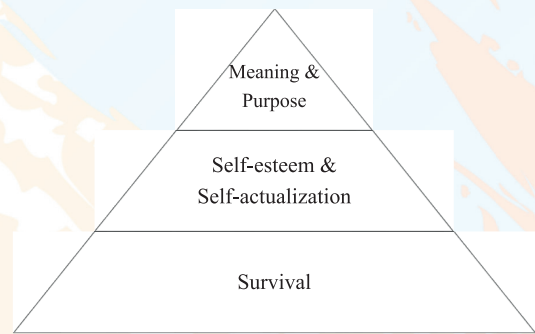


Figure 2: Holistic Life Planning Education (Leong, 2005)

esteem and self-actualization, means students need to psychologically know what their interests, abilities and values are and apply them to increasing their self-satisfaction in life. The top level suggests students should find their life goals and social contribution by work. This three-level model is closely aligned with the framework of holistic education above (Wong, et al., 2016), to be more specific, the level of survival corresponds to the materialistic life which is “body” , then the second level is similar to the element of “mind” , and the scale of meaning is connected with “spirituality” . In addition, Leong (2005) highlighted that all the activities of life planning education are conducted in different life sites, such as family, school, workplace, and etc., which reflects the interpersonal life under the element of “community” in holistic

education. Through Leong's (2005) model, it is clear that education for survival or “body” is the foundation in life planning education and the ultimate objective is to seek life meaning under “spirituality” .

4. Implementation of Holistic Career and Life Planning Education in Schools

It is vital to consider an appropriate approach and effective strategies to integrate a holistic career and life planning education into the current school curriculum. Various studies reached consent that life planning education should be conducted through the whole school approach (Leong, 2005; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013; EDB, 2014; Lee, 2015; HKFYG, 2019). The whole school commitment could establish a culture of life planning where all the teachers can fully understand and support each other in career-related teaching or counseling work. EDB (2014) specifically pointed out that career guidance personnel (CGP) should be led by school leaders and consists of career teachers, class teachers, subject teachers, and other academic or administrative school staff, meanwhile, it set up some general functions and responsibilities for the whole CGP while

did not provide a clear distribution of duties to each particular group or member.

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2013), however, demonstrated that the whole-school approach based career education should consider all the school stakeholders instead of only school personnel, which is more aligned with holistic views. It suggested that schools should establish a “Career/Life Planning Program Advisory Committee” including representatives of school administrators, counselors, parents, students, and the community, and the committee is mainly responsible for communication, coordination and implementation of life planning program (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Ho (2016) highlighted the influences of parents and school-community collaboration on career education in her research.

The whole-school approach for implementing holistic career and life planning education should consider a dynamic interaction between school, family and external community involving all stakeholders (Figure 3), and it also responds to “community” , one of the elements in the

proposed holistic life planning framework. Family and broad community are responsible for communication and coordination in the life planning program, while school leaders and teachers should devote themselves to the actual implementation apart from another two functions. Particularly, different school departments or members involving life planning education should be endowed with a clear and distinct responsibility so that they could work on their own specific roles to empower students to explore future life.

From the perspective of psychological intervention, Spokane (1991) summarized five categories of strategies for career planning:

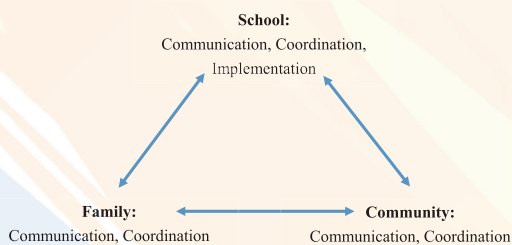


Figure 3: Dynamic Interaction between SFC

- providing information on career and jobs
- self-directed activities
- career curriculum
- group counseling
- individual counseling

The first three strategies among these categories more emphasize education, while the fourth and the fifth focus on the level of psychotherapy (Leong, 2005). In Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2013) particularly recommended four major effective strategies under two dimensions to implement career education:

- Individual assistance
 - ✧ evidence-based learning
 - ✧ transition planning
- Learning opportunities
 - ✧ curriculum-related activities and programs
 - ✧ school-wide activities
 - ✧ community activities

It suggests that school counselors or teachers should help children gather their learning evidence through personal portfolio and individual pathway plan, further fostering their own abilities to plan various transitions during different developmental stages (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). The Ontario Ministry of Education tends to use activity-based strategies to implement life planning education. In Hong Kong, the Guide raised six dimensions of career intervention

at secondary schools, “life planning education & career guidance framework”, “linking study opportunities and career choices”, “school-wide career guidance activities”, “learning experiences about work”, “individual student planning”, and “responsive services” (EDB, 2014). Based on Spokane (1991), the Ontario Ministry of Education (2013), and EDB (2014), effective strategies could be concluded in three dimensions, curriculum-based strategies, activity-based strategies, counseling-based strategies. Thus, based on the whole-school approach, a holistic career and life planning strategy model is indicated as below (Figure 4):

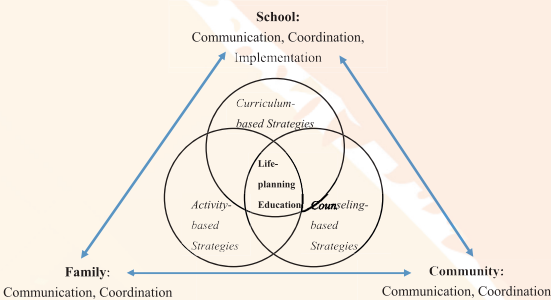


Figure 4: Holistic Career & Life Planning Strategy Model

This model implies that schools should fully take advantages of the whole-school approach to implement life planning education, especially make good use of the resources from school, family and community to conduct three kinds of strategies. With the

dynamic interaction among all stakeholders, the specific strategies of each dimension could be:

- Curriculum-based strategies
 - ✧ school-based life planning curriculum
 - ✧ integration into life education and other academic subjects
 - ✧ cooperative curriculum with colleges and universities
 - ✧ career sharing lectures (parents, alumni, community members)
 - ✧ parents workshop
- Activity-based strategies
 - ✧ experiential learning programs
 - ✧ career exploration activities (eg., job shadowing, career fair)
 - ✧ college fair
 - ✧ school-wide activities
 - ✧ community activities (eg., volunteer work)
- Counseling-based strategies
 - ✧ group counseling
 - ✧ individual counseling
 - ✧ personal portfolio for life planning

5. Difficulties and Challenges

Despite a holistic career and life

planning education is important, there are difficulties which should be taken into consideration and deal with in the future.

1.Lack of career and life planning awareness (HKFYG, 2019).

The idea of life planning education is new to some parents and teachers, thus some of them would have misunderstand or even ignore it. It definitely would negatively influence the smooth implementation of career and life planning education, and block the whole-school commitment sharing. Therefore, professional development and parents workshops are necessary to change this situation.

2.Teachers' workload (Lee, 2017; Ho, et al., 2016; HKFYG, 2019).

The whole-school approach requires most teachers involving life planning education to devote themselves to both teaching and career education, thus their workload would be increased dramatically. Some teachers express that life planning education has been a burden to their daily teaching. It is challenging for teachers to

balance their devotion to each kind of work, and also for educational leaders to consider how to relieve these teachers' workload.

3.Social echos (HKFYG, 2019).

The ultimate goal of life planning education is to seek an appropriate career pathway and find life meaning, however, in today's society, most citizens tend to consider life goals or dreams to be equal to high income and social status. Students believe a university diploma is the only ticket to the success, which to some extent restraints their career choices and life planning. This phenomenon cannot be changed in a short time because even the mass media nowadays is promoting such kind of social echos.

4.Chinese collectivism culture (Fan & Leong, 2016; Lee, et al., 2018).

The idea of career and life planning education is based on western theories which focus on independent thinking and choices. Nevertheless, Chinese people are unique because Confucious culture is embedded with collectivism. Therefore, it is challenging for teachers to guide students as their choices

would be influenced by other peers, and most significantly by their parents.

5. Special education need students

(Fan & Leong, 2016; Lee, et al., 2018; Zhou, et al., 2016).

In Chinese societies, the inclusive classroom is not as normal as that in western countries, and it is similar to life planning education. Special education need students have their own special need, thus educational leaders and teachers still should research and practice more to find an appropriate way to build an inclusive life planning program which is suitable in Chinese environment. 🌱

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