How compatible are the Hong Kong Benchmarks for Career and Life Development (HKBM) and the Education Bureau's Guide on Life Planning Education and Career Guidance?

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Introduction

'Gatsby Benchmarks' is a framework that depicts best practices of career guidance (CG) of six developed countries¹ that the Department for Education, UK recently expects all secondary schools to make strategic reference in developing own provisions by 2020 (Holman, 2014). The framework, which is now highly regarded in the global communities, demonstrated costbenefit considerations of adopting the benchmarks in English state schools with the predicted economic benefits of better CG provisions for all secondary students. (p38-45).

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, which has been pioneering Career and Life Planning in Hong Kong schools since 2014, started a pilot study at the end of the five-year project 'CLAP for Youth @JC' to engage the author of Gatsby Benchmarks, Sir John Holman and a widely represented group of local experts and practitioners in Hong Kong to launch a pilot study in 2019 to co-create the new 'Hong Kong Benchmarks for Career and Life Development' (HKBM) as the *adapted* version of the UK framework. In the HKBM, there are ten benchmarks to suit local contexts and needs but at the same time preserve the spirit of the UK counterpart. Building on such experience and foundation, the HKBM is the backbone of the Phase Two of 'CLAP for Youth@JC' from 2020, in which will involve more network schools, enterprises and community agencies. This article aims to review the development of CG in Hong Kong and discuss the policy compatibility of the HKBM and its concepts behind through brief documentary analysis with a research question, *How compatible are HKBM and the Education Bureau's Guide on Life Planning Education and Career Guidance*?. The ten benchmarks of HKBM are as follows:

- 1. A Stable and Visible Career and Life Development Policy (BM1)
- 2. Professional Competencies and Leadership (BM2)
- 3. Learning from Multiple Pathways Information (BM3)
- 4. Address the Needs of Each Student (BM4)
- 5. Student Engagement and Co-creation (BM5)
- 6. Personal Guidance for Developing Career Roadmaps (BM6)
- 7. Linking Curriculum Learning to Career and Life Development (BM7)

¹ Six countries/regions are the United Kingdoms (UK), The Netherlands, Germany, Ontario, Canada, Finland and Ireland. Countries/ regions e.g. New Zealand, Hong Kong China, Korea, are adopting/ adapting Gatsby Benchmarks for career and life education.

- 8. Meaningful Encounters with the Workplace (BM8)
- 9. Meaningful Encounters with Further and Higher Education (BM9)
- 10. Parent Engagement and Support (BM10)

(http://hkbm.clapforyouth.org.hk/main/)

Background: the Policy Perspective

CG practice becomes increasingly important in schools since the issuance of the Education Commission No. 4 Report (Education Commission, 1990), which briefly highlights the CG service as part of the whole-school provisions. Since then, there is a policy tradition of 'whole school approach' backed by the Education Department (predecessor of the Education Bureau, EDB) for CG as some scholars described (Yang and Wong, 2020). Along such CG policy tradition, the Education Department published its first *policy guide* in 2001 to convey guidelines and principles for a school-based CG programme, in light of helping students to make career choices according to their own interests, abilities and needs. However, the policy at the time is criticised as *service-oriented* in which CG teachers are expected to provide 'services' such as updated information for further studies and conducting counselling sessions (Ho and Leung, 2016).

Another key milestone of CG policy development is the emergence of the change of the academic structure, namely the new academic structure (NAS). Under the launch of NAS since 2009, cohorts of HKDSE graduates have embarked on a four-year undergraduate study as well as other multiple further-study pathways (e.g. sub-degree education, post-secondary vocational training). Only 8-9% of school graduates entered into part-time or full-time employment according to statistics, which means that most of the school leavers are continuing some kinds of further study (Education Bureau, 2018; *Chinese only*). In addition, the new secondary curriculum also requires S3 students to choose two elective subjects or Applied Learning courses to study in their senior forms. The new secondary curriculum has also included *Career-related Experiences* or activities to enable students to understand the existing world of work and its demands (Education Bureau, 2017, Booklet 7; Yip, 2004).

To many extents, the NAS gives both challenges and opportunities to CG. First, instead of offering 'vocational-placement' (or 'study-placements) services mainly at senior forms, CG in schools are in needs of broadening itself to a 'development-oriented' model (Yang and Wong, 2020, p.6) or a comprehensive 'Career and Life Planning' (CLP) framework of practice (Ho, 2010). Actually, the emerging notion of CLP is not new in Greater China regions but carries many different origins and interpretations (Lee, Cheung & Li, 2019, p.63-65). In sum, CLP (or sometimes, it is translated as 'Life Planning') emphasises the priority need of self-understanding in CG based on early work of Frank Parsons (1854-1908) in his influential book, "*Choosing a Vocation*" (Parsons, 1909) and a century later, in many vocational psychologists' works (e.g. Holland, 1997) as well as the recent global movement of Career Construction and Life Design (Savickas, 2016). Secondly, it also highlights the essential provisions of learning experiences and development of essential skills that could *prepare* our students to transit successfully from school to work. In terms of philosophical purposes of education, CLP as a broader notion of CG, is no longer a school service or a series of student development activities/

events. It touches the 'pragmatist' and 'futurist' perspectives of education in particular, and by definition, positions in the core business of school education (Knight, 1998; Lee, Cheung & Li, 2019, p74-75). Like Alex Moore, Emeritus Professor at UCL Institute of Education, who paraphrased Bruner's key views on the purpose of education: school education should be more '*prospective*' – i.e. preparing students for or help them to shape the future, rather than just about teaching 'canonical content' or values from the *past* and from the *existing* ('*retrospective*') (Moore, 2000, p47-48; Bruner, 1996, p.ix). In many ways, CLP education is arguably the most appropriate provision that can add this '*prospective*' aspect of education into existing school contexts or in EDB's curriculum policy terms, CLP can develop students with 'a sense of future' (Education Bureau, 2017, Booklet 7, p27).

With increasing societal demand for preparing young people for their future, CLP (or in EDB's notion, 'Life Planning Education') has gradually become an indisputable and integral component in school's strategic planning. In 2014, the Policy Address reinforced this broadened concept of CG through issuing the definitive guide, 'Guide on Life Planning Education and Career Guidance for Secondary Schools' (Education Bureau, 2014) and allocated resources. In 2017, the EDB issued a checklist for schools to implement CLP under the concept of whole-school approach. In addition, it is worth noting that all these CG guides are not created in a vacuum but are based on the key principles laid down by the Curriculum Development Council's New Senior Secondary Curriculum framework, which are explicitly elaborated in the curriculum guide (Booklet 9), "Student Guidance on Careers and Further Studies – Exploring the Future, Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide – The Future is Now: from Vision to Realisation" (EDB 2009). In this seminal EDB document, the Hong Kong Association of Career Masters and Guidance Masters (HKACMGM), as the key player of the field, proposed a more holistic, developmental and systematic approach for 'career education and guidance' in the NAS era, which forms the essential building blocks of the later CG-related guides in 2014 and 2017 (ibid, Appendix 1).

However, despite its ever-broadening scope and strong policy-backing for CLP, there are some criticisms about the CLP notion of being too 'short-term based' while its practice is still 'limited to planning future studies and career options' and sometimes being over-mechanistic and inflexible in facing the ongoing uncertainties in the 21st Century (Lee, Cheung & Li, 2019, p65). In this light, 'Career and Life Development' (CLD) is recently coined more frequently by some local key players (e.g. the JC CLAP community project) as an *umbrella* notion in recent years to emphasise both its long-term developmental nature and its strong connectivity with existing school *education or curriculum* (JC 2020). In sum, the current CG policy in Hong Kong is primarily consolidated in the government guide in 2014 with a broadened concept of Life Planning Education, CLP or CLD whereas their meanings are still fluid and subject to further deliberation among policymakers, leaders and practitioners.

HKBM and the Education Bureau's Guide (2014)

This section aims to explore the compatibility between the new HKBM and the 'Guide on Life Planning Education and Career Guidance for Secondary Schools' (EDB Guide 2014) as the key CG policy document. The compatibility study is meaningful because the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has recently launched the Phase Two of the "CLAP for Youth@JC" with nearly \$450 Millions² to foster sustainable ecosystem to smoothen the transition from school to productive work and fulfilling life. HKBM forms the backbone of the project for secondary schools to adopt as key Career and Life Development (CLD) strategy or tool. In the second-phase project, school leaders would have to face a critical and accountability-oriented decision in adopting the HKBM as the strategic school development tool. School leaders would like to know whether HKBM could align with existing quality assurance mechanisms³ (EDB, 2019) and at the same time could fully satisfy the present policy requirements well-documented in the EDB Guide 2014. Such leadership consideration is pragmatic but essential in light of current high workload pressure in schools at all fronts. In order to address such concern, we focus on the documentary comparison between the over-arching principles and key features of HKBM and the main elements in the EDB Guide 2014. The findings are as follows.

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HKBM Principles/Features	HKB M	Corresponding points and quotes from EDB Guide 2014		
r rincipies/r eatures	Refer			
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		rinciples of What good looks like in CLD		
Purpose: Transition from	Core	As one of the 'Vision' (3.1.1), students are assisted "in managing and		
School to Work	value	adapting to the transition from school to work" and also stressed as one of the 'Recommended Principles' (3.2; p10)		
Positioning: as Self-	Core	'reflective practices through the cyclic process of Planning-		
improvement tool - Self-evaluation/ audit - Action Planning - Implementation	value	Implementation-Evaluation (PIE) for continuous improvement' (3.1.1; p9)		
		"In the planning stage, schools are advised to make reference to it in <i>auditing</i> their current state of life planning education and career guidance service, formulating school-based goals and implementation		
		strategies, setting success criteria and devising method of evaluation appropriate to their needs. <i>Continuous self-improvement</i> can be achieved through school's monitoring of the implementation and		
		progress of the work, plan, evaluation on an <i>evidence-based</i> approach and commitment to <i>follow up actions</i> ." (5.2.2, p16-17)		
		'Reference Information for Facilitating Schools' Self-evaluation on Life Planning Education' (Appendix 2)		
Key Features of What good looks like in CLD				
CLD as stable whole- school policy; - comprehensive & systematic approach of school development; - change towards holistic/ coordinated manner	BM1	" a policy statement endorsed by the Incorporated Management Committee (IMC)/School Management Committee (SMC) reflecting school's shared commitment <i>towards a more coordinated and systemic</i> <i>approach</i> is instrumental in guiding the planning, implementation and evaluation of life planning education." (5.1.1; p16)		
		"to take forth a paradigm shift from career information dissemination to implementation of more life planning education elements in a holistic and systematic manner" (8.1.3; p30)		
		" schools should designate their career master/mistress to spearhead the <i>paradigm shift</i> towards a holistic approach to life planning education and career guidance, to support the IMC/SMC in formulating school- based planning and strategy" (8.1.4; p31) [i.e. designating dynamic role of Career mistress/ master as conditions for accept the CLP Grant]		

² At least 30% of the project resources go to support secondary schools.

³ 'School Development Planning Process' – HKBM as part of the School Self-evaluation (SSE) in a wellsupported and 'secure' environment. (Note 1)

Санаан Сана Таана	DM2	"Schools' Course Teams may consist of the following membran
Career Core Team composition: - Broadening of Career Team membership; - Distributed Leadership (Note 2)	BM2	"Schools' Career Teams may consist of the following members: Principal, vice principal or a senior teacher (Career Master/Mistress) as the co-ordinator; -Career teachers; -Class teachers and subject teachers; and -Curriculum development leaders, guidance teachers, school social workers, I.T. coordinators, administrative support staff." (4.1.2; p11)
Role of Career Core Team to coordinate and build partnership with teachers and multiple stakeholders	BM2	"the Career Team should liaise/forge strong partnership with parents, teachers, school leaders, other school personnel, employers, institutes of further studies and community organisations in the planning and delivery of life planning education and career guidance service/programmes." (6.1.5, p.21) Parties involved with CLD provisions – "Student, School leaders, Class/ subject teachers, Other school personnel, School partners" (p22, Figure 5 ⁴)
Professional Capacity Building for career team, teachers and other personnel; hub learning among schools	BM2	"Schools are encouraged to make arrangements to release <i>Career Guidance Personnel (CGP) or teachers</i> concerned to attend relevant professional development courses and participate in seminars/talks/workshops to enhance the professional capacity to implement life planning education." (4.3.1; p14) "enhance the professional capacity as well as to promote professional exchanges among schools and CGP." (8.1.6; p31-2)
Information on Multiple Pathways - Both study and vocational paths - VPET	BM3	"life planning education plays a significant role in fostering students' self-understanding, personal planning, goal setting, reflective habits of mind and <i>articulation to progression pathways</i> not merely a remedial or advisory service for students when they are in need of <i>making subject or career choice.</i> " (1.2; p3) "Do students make use of a range of information sources (e.g. requirements and procedures to pursue further studies, the Qualifications Framework, job search materials, etc) and devise practical plans" (Attachment of Appendix 2; Q6; p36) Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (2017) Booklet 9 Titled, "Career and Life Planning – <i>Multiple Pathways for All Students</i> to Excel" "With the gaining popularity and recognition of VPET programmes in Hong Kong, teachers should be equipped with sufficient knowledge of VPET, among other articulation and career options" (SECG, 2017, Booklet 9, p4)
Addressing needs of each student - Students with diverse needs - Needs of "Alternative Pathfinders"	BM4	 'align with the developmental needs of students at different stages of growth, thus differential provision in service should be considered.' (3.2.1; p10) "Are there any programmes to cater for the different career guidance needs of students with specific background (e.g. gifted, special education needs, non-Chinese, etc.)?" (Reference Information for Facilitating Schools' Self-evaluation on Life Planning Education and Career Guidance Service, Q2; Attachment of Appendix 2; p36) 'Individual Student Planning' as one of the dimensions of Career Intervention (Figure 5, p22)
Student engagement and co-creation - From student ownership to 'authorship' - Student-driven approach ⁵	BM5	Student empowerment is stressed in both the "vision" and "recommended principles" that students should be "empowered to make informed and responsible choices on their learning, career goals and other aspects leading to a meaningful life;" (3.1.1, p.9 and 3.2.1 p.10)

⁴ See Appendix 1

⁵ "Student as Learning Experience Designer" (Student-LED) Approach: Tracy X. P. Zou, Neil C. Mickleborough, Stanley S. M. Ho & Stephen Y. W. Yip (2015) Students as learning experience designers: the effect of student-driven approaches in a Hong Kong study, International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning, 10:3, 179-193.

Personal Guidance for	BM6	Secondary Education Curriculum Guide Booklet 7 - "Adopting a "Student as Learning Experience Designers" (Student-LED) Approach to Fostering Whole person Development which encourages students to take a more active role in planning and organising their own learning experiences empowers students to take up different responsibilities and organise their own activities" (2017; p21) "Guidance and Counselling for Individuals" (Figure 8, p27)
Career Roadmap - Individual guidance - Number of sessions in KS4	21110	" to <i>advise students individually and in groups</i> , identify their career development problems and needs and coach them to find, develop and review their personal plans and career goals" (4.2.1; p13)
Connections with subject learning/ curriculum - Class Teacher Periods/ MCE/Life Education - KLA/Subject Curriculum - LWL/OLE/ Career related Experiences	BM7	"flexible connection with relevant components of subject learning" (3.1.1; p9) "integral parts of the holistic school curriculum" (6.2.1; p23)
Meaningful Encounters with workplace/ enterprise - Observational Activities - Activities enabling students to understand and participate in different workplace roles (e.g. job tasting, job shadowing)	BM8	" reasonable time which can include formal lesson time (e.g. class teacher periods), after-school sessions, outside school hours and some school holidays can be reserved in the school calendar for delivering the life planning and career-related activities (e.g. <i>career visits and work experience schemes</i>)." (6.4.2; p26) Diagram titled "A Framework of Enhancing <i>Career-related Experiences</i> for Secondary School Students" (p27) "Relate and integrate learning outcomes from Career Related Experiences or work-based learning into exploration of study, training and work options." (Figure 7; p24) Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (2017) Booklet 9 (whole booklet) and 7 (p27-28), e.g. "Schools should provide " <i>a totality of experiences</i> " for students to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes about self and work, as well as to start and manage their career and life planning."(EDB 2017; p4)
Encounters with FE and HE - Information and Direct interactions - Including VPET	BM9	"Organising School-wide Career Guidance Activities" – "University Taster Programmes or Camps" (Figure 8) "Vocational and professional education training (VPET) may be introduced to students as an articulation choice through relevant career-related experiences." (EDB 2017, Booklet 7, p7)
Parental Engagement - Systematic; - Communication strategy to guide; - Involvement of parents in CLD events/activities.	BM10	"the Career Team should liaise/forge strong partnership with parents, teachers, school leaders, other school personnel, employers, institutes of further studies and community organisations in the planning and delivery of life planning education and career guidance service/programmes." (6.1.5; p21) 'School Partners & Stakeholders' – "Examples: parents, employers, institutes of further studies and community organisations." (p22)

The above comparison table shows that the HKBM is broadly compatible to the EDB Guide 2014 as well as to other related curriculum guides, in terms of their principles and key features of CLD practice. According to an internal supporting advice from the EDB in 2020, the HKBM can complement EDB's efforts in promoting LPE⁶ and the authority considers it as a good reference framework which facilitate education practitioners to formulate action plans for the implementation of CLD or CG.

⁶ LPE- Life Planning Education

Discussion

HKBM is not just a CLD guide book or a checklist but a self-improvement *process* for *schools* to enhancing the chance of young people in taking a *smooth* journey from school-to-work. From a wider perspective, it also positions itself in the *strategic interface* that school can and should bridge with the community, business world, parents, and further education sectors for a mutually-beneficial purpose that can yield ongoing social impacts at societal level (Hughes et al, 2016; Sanders, 2003). Indeed it advocates a good practice for the *whole society* or in CLAP's term, 'sustainable eco-system' which echoes with the recent *ecological* model of CLD by Hong Kong scholars (Tsui et al, 2019). In the local model, five systems are identified for influencing CLD in schools, namely, *individual system, social system, environmental-societal system, past-present-future system*, and *process influences*, using McMahon's Systems Theory Framework (McMahon et al, 2015) and HKBM shares similarity with the conceptual model that CLD is not just about one-to-one counselling.

Finally, HKBM serves not just the *policy fulfilment* but aims to add values to schools and the education sector upon the following:

First, it provides a *common* framework for schools and stakeholders to understand what a good CLD practice should look like, in terms of quantity, quality, scope and diversity so that policymakers can be more informed with possible cost-and-benefit considerations. Secondly, it demonstrates a new breed of whole-school approach that celebrates the values of coordinating/networking and distributed leadership (MacBeath, 2005; Spillane, 2006)(Note 2). It both highlights the professional role of Career Masters in CLD and the need of *lessening* the 'leadership density' from the CG core to enable other teachers (e.g. class teachers, subject panels, coordinators of various non-academic areas) to carry certain extents of CLD under the school-based development framework. Such practice is believed to influence the overall collaborative culture in schools. Thirdly, HKBM is solidly based on the framework that is well-tested with many developed countries, which eventually makes our young people more prepared to the future in terms of maintaining global competitiveness.

As a way forward, the JC-funded CLAP Phase II project with its core concepts of HKBM will address and demonstrate the systemic/ multi-level impacts of such model with larger school sample in this challenging era via multi-level research study. Sir John Holman, Global Adviser of the JC Phase II Project said,

"In an uncertain world, we can be sure of one thing: whatever the future of employment looks like, young people will need help to navigate the way. The Hong Kong Benchmarks for Careers & Life Development ("HKBM") – supported by this guidance - are an important aid to this navigation." (Holman, 2020, from the CLAP for Youth@ JC Phase II website)

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Note 1: School Self-evaluation (SSE), according to the former EDB's advisor in quality assurance of schools in HK, Professor John MacBeath (University of Cambridge), carries a much deeper formative meaning in enabling schools to feel 'secure and confident enough to be

self-critical when they have tools and expertise to evaluate themselves.'(1997) than just a documentary preparation for inspections/ external reviews.

Note 2: Distributed leadership in CLD contexts broadly refers to a family of effective whole school leadership approaches that characterizes CLD task distribution when the leadership density lessened from the 'power centre', core career team or the "Principal office" (MacBeath, 2005; Spillane, 2006) and spread towards the school's professional communities. This approach type is particularly useful in breaking 'silo' among CLD-related initiatives, through effective management, leadership, networking and coordinating of the core career team.

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