

In Search for Effective Career and Life Development: *The Map, Friends and Stories*

The search for effective Career and Life Development (CLD) practice in schools is like treasure hunting in the wilderness without a map. Many of the guidelines, manuals, research, and tips available are often conflicting, fragmented or ambiguous. They are usually good at telling practitioners *what to do* with needle-sharp precision within each aspect of CLD (e.g. career counselling/life designing, workplace learning, parental engagement) but often fail to plan with a big picture in mind as if a *reliable map was* missing. Having gone through many CLD-related initiatives in the HK school sector over the years, many questions are still left unanswered in terms of its quality (*how good*), quantity (*how many*), scope (*how big*) and diversity (*how many kinds of what*). Not to mention the synergising energy and capacity that require schools to lead, manage, coordinate and network all these CLD provisions in their own organisational cultures.

Schools need a map, a common map, well-tested by experts and other users. To a large extent, the locally-piloted “Hong Kong Benchmarks for CLD” (HKBM) is a reliable map for careers education that reflects both our local characteristics and global standards.

In search of the journey for best practice, schools need friends – critical friends who are trusted, and willing to appreciate school work while offering solutions from different ‘lenses’, as well as to ask ‘difficult questions’ in terms of quality and connectivity. In this new JC project, we take a *naturalistic* approach of providing critical friend support that is conducted by a cross-sectoral professional team trained with essential knowledge of HKBM and art of connoisseurship. Schools will enjoy social learning with others within hubs, too.

Schools also need their own *stories of change* for CLD for all reasons, including knowledge succession in order to build true sustainability. A story of change, which includes evidence-informed reflection, prioritisation, action planning for ongoing improvement and students’ impact database, can be confidently told in front of any stakeholders or future visitors. In this project, each network school will have opportunities to sharpen such storytelling capability within their assigned hub and proudly celebrate achievements and successes with CLD stories, both big and small.

Hong Kong has a strong tradition in career guidance in terms of specific professional capacity and policy support. In light of a much broader goal of CLD, we need to take a brave step forward to adopt the Map (HKBM), to self-evaluate and prioritise own areas of improvement with entrusted critical friends, and to create the story of CLD!

I sincerely invite secondary schools and teachers who care for young people’s future to join this network programme.

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