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Project P.A.T.H.S. in Hong Kong: New Curriculum in Response to Adolescent Developmental Issues

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Starting from 2005, a team of researchers from five universities in Hong Kong have constructed a comprehensive positive youth development package for junior secondary school students in Hong Kong [1, 2]. The whole project is called P.A.T.H.S. (Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social Programs), and it is fully sponsored by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust (HKJCCT), with an earmarked grant of HK\$400 million for the development, implementation, training, and evaluation components of the project. The package focuses on various aspects of positive youth development [3], and it has been used by more than 250 secondary schools in Hong Kong (i.e., roughly half of the secondary schools in Hong Kong). There are two versions of the package in complex Chinese characters and English. Besides, another version using simplified Chinese characters has also been produced in Mainland China [4]. A lot of research was also performed on the effectiveness and educational implications of the teaching package [5–11]. The construction and research of this positive youth development program opened a new page of study in the field of whole-person education and youth education in Chinese societies. In view of the data collected so far, the teaching package is well received by students, teachers, and educators in Hong Kong. The evaluation findings also suggest that the project is able to promote youth development and reduce adolescent problem behavior.

The success of the first project eventually attracted another grant of HK\$350 million from The HKJCCT to run the extension phase of the project in 2009. Most of the researchers of the first project also participated in the second project. The main theme of this project was to construct a new positive

youth development program with reference to a number of common adolescent developmental problems as follows: (a) drug abuse (20 units), (b) sex and love issues (15 units), (c) bullying (7 units), (d) problematic Internet use (9 units), and (e) concept of money (9 units). A total of 60 units were constructed [12]. Each unit takes 30 to 35 minutes to teach in classroom. The Internet version, both in Chinese and English, was produced from 2009 to 2010 and is being used in parallel with the 120 units of the first teaching package. This special collection of papers focuses on the rationales underlying the curriculum development of the new teaching package as well as a thorough discussion of the relevant adolescent development issues. The first two papers by D. T. L. Shek et al. clearly outlined the principles of positive youth development as well as a summary of the current research on the five adolescent developmental problems that were addressed in the construction of the teaching package.

The prevalence of drug abuse in adolescents has attracted tremendous attention of parents and educators in recent years in Hong Kong. As such, it is also a major focus in the second project. There are four papers on drug education. T. Y. Lee delineated in detail the reasons why adolescents take psychotropic drugs and then proposed a positive youth development perspective in the design of a prevention curriculum to deal with this important developmental issue. B. M. F. Law and T. Y. Lee focused on emotional competence in designing an anti-drug education curriculum. They argued that emotional competence is an important aspect of life skill, and life skill training would definitely help adolescents stay away from drugs. S. K. M. Tsang proposed that parental engagement is most important in youth drug prevention. Her discussion on some positive attempts in Hong Kong appears to be interesting and promising. Finally, C. M. Lam et al. presented a more general conceptual base for designing a drug education curriculum. They put forward a set of four positive youth development constructs (cognitive competence, emotional competence, beliefs in the future, and self-efficacy) in the design of a drug education program. The proposal is comprehensive, relevant and very constructive.

Hong Kong is an international financial centre and people are quite money-oriented. T. Y. Lee and B. M. F. Law gave an interesting account about the profound impact of materialistic orientation among adolescents. They proposed a conceptual framework on money literacy based on the positive youth development model. The framework serves as a foundation for the construction of a financial education package. In the same vein, P. S. Y. Lau et al. designed a money management curriculum based on positive youth constructs such as cognitive competence, self-efficacy and spirituality.

Bullying has become a serious problem in some schools in Hong Kong. E. K. P. Hui et al. tried to elaborate this issue from a developmental guidance perspective. They argued that by promoting positive youth development and harmonious school culture, we would be able to combat school bullying in a very positive manner. Besides, S. K. M. Tsang et al. showed that bystanders play a vital role in the process of bullying. They argued that an understanding of the characteristics of bystanders (e.g., identity, self-efficacy, and self-determination) would help us in the design of antibullying curriculum. Similarly, S. K. M. Tsang concurs with E. K. P. Hui that the positive youth development model is useful in the construction of anti-bullying curriculum.

The paper by H. K. Ma on antisocial Internet use addressed two main issues: Internet addiction and moral development in the cyber world. A discussion of the current issues of Internet addiction was presented. The characteristics of Internet addiction were also clearly described. The contemporary theory of moral development was employed to depict the characteristics of moral behavior in the cyber world. The discussion is meaningful and constructive. Another paper by H. K. Ma et al. on Internet use education explained the rationales underlying the construction of the teaching package on Internet use. A review of current research on prosocial and antisocial use of Internet was given. The construction of three sample units was also discussed in detail.

While issues pertinent to sex and love are not discussed in any single paper, they are outlined in D. T. L. Shek et al.'s paper on program construction. This is the first special collection of papers based on the extension phase of the Project P.A.T.H.S. in Hong Kong which forms a solid foundation for cross-cultural

and evaluation research. It is also the first known collection of scientific papers on the development of positive youth development programs with reference to the major developmental issues in Hong Kong.

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