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### **Factors Contributing to the Success of a Life and Career Planning Program based on the Positive Youth Development Approach**

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#### **Abstract:**

Based on the qualitative data collected from a case interview with the chief program implementer as well as focus group interviews with 57 Secondary 3 students in Hong Kong, factors contributing to the success of a life and career planning program adopting a positive youth development approach in a secondary school were examined. Six themes conducive to program success were extracted from the narratives: a) clear objectives with strong emphasis on adolescent psychosocial development, b) diverse and creative program design, c) experiential approach that allowed participants to experience, reflect and learn, d) quality implementers, e) continuous feedback from the participants, and f) good timing in launching the program. The factors suggest that the positive youth development approach provides a holistic framework of the design and content of the life and career development. Theoretical and practical implications of the study are discussed.

**Keywords:** Life and career planning, positive youth development, adolescents, Chinese, focus group

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## Introduction

Adolescents are the backbone of the future society. They search for self-identity and independence and develop their competencies so as to become independent, competent and responsible adults who make necessary contributions to the family, community and society. However, adolescents today might be too well-protected and better-nurtured by their parents. Generation theorists use different terminologies to describe the adolescents nowadays as Generation ME (1), the Net Generation (2), and the Millennials (3). The Millennials are portrayed as confident, sheltered and achieving individuals (3). But at the same time, the Generation ME are described as egocentric and narcissistic (1). Schneider and Stevenson (4) suggested that the youth today are motivated but directionless.

Life and career development has become a hot topic in the local and global contexts. According to the American Counseling Association, career development is the “total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors that combine to influence the nature and significance of work in the total life span of any given individual” (5, p. 2). Under this definition, career development is the development of one’s purposes, tasks and choices for the fulfillment of one’s needs and life goals at different stages of life.

While some life and career development programs focus on personality-career match and vocational preparation (e.g. 6,7), there are some programs that emphasize the personal development of the individuals (8,9). For instance, Solberg et al. (8) expanded the school-to-work (STW) intervention model to school-to-work-to-life (STWL) intervention model and paid more emphasis on helping the youth to develop their competencies so that they could adapt successfully to the changing environment. Sue et al. (9) developed a model of resilience that portrays how one’s strengths and potential maximize one’s mental health and emphasized the importance of middle school students to build up resiliency against adversity. These models echo the conceptual framework of positive youth development that emphasizes the assets, abilities and potential of adolescents (10,11).

In Hong Kong, life planning education plays an overarching role in “fostering students’ self-understanding, personal planning, goal setting, reflective habits of mind and articulation to progression pathways” (12, p. 3). There are three components of life and career development: self-understanding and development, career exploration, and career planning and management. It has been emphasized that life and career development should be in line with the whole-person development and life-long learning (12). Unfortunately, life and career development in Hong Kong has been criticized as fragmented and superficial, with a narrow focus of information dissemination of educational and vocational opportunities, and a lack of theory and practice among career guidance teachers (13).

Against this background, a non-governmental organization attempted to incorporate the positive youth development approach in the design of a life and career development program for Secondary 3 students from a government-subsidized school within the context of the P.A.T.H.S. Project (14,15). When the Secondary 3 students were facing the need to select subjects for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) and their genuine needs in life and career development, the principal and teachers of the school discovered anxiety and loss of direction in these students. With the collaboration of a non-governmental organization, a life and career development program using the positive youth development approach was launched in the secondary school during the academic years of 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. The program aimed at developing the competencies of Secondary 3 students and motivating them in the formulation of life goals.

The program reported in this paper covered eight sessions. The first two sessions took a whole form approach to introduce the concepts of life career planning to the students and

raise their awareness of the importance of life goal formulation. A talk and a workshop (the “mini society”) were organized. The third to eighth sessions used a group-work strategy to provide different experiential opportunities for the participants to experience, reflect and learn. These programs included: a) adventure-based training program to build their resilience, problem-solving capacity and teamwork of the students, b) a workshop on understanding the life course of career development through experiential games, c) visits to enterprises and sharing sessions with entrepreneurs so as to understand the importance of life goal formulation and persistence attitudes, d) a simulated job interview for the students to realize the requirements of the employers and learn the expression skills, e) a “university hunt” to motivate the students in their life planning, and f) an award presentation ceremony to reinforce and award the students for their effort and participation. The Program was highly appreciated by the students (16). It is both interesting and important to extract the factors contributing to the success of the program as it is a novel attempt to integrate positive youth development paradigm and life career development intervention strategy in Hong Kong.

This study examined the factors contributing to the success of a life and career development program adopting the positive youth development approach that was delivered to secondary school students in Hong Kong. In the study, the chief program implementer and two cohorts of participants (2014-2015 and 2015-2016) were invited to share their views and experience after joining the program respectively. The focus group methodology was widely used in different phases and programs of the Project P.A.T.H.S. (17).

## **Methods**

### **Participants and Procedures**

The data were collected from both implementer and participants. The chief program designer-cum-implementer of the Tier 2 Program of the Project P.A.T.H.S. during the academic years of 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 was invited for an in-depth interview. She was a social worker who had been working in a non-governmental organization for three years at the time of interview. Her main duty was to design, implement and coordinate Project P.A.T.H.S. in several schools, including the studied school. Informed consent of the social worker was sought. The interview was conducted by the researcher based on an interview guide (Appendix 1). The interview was conducted in a university and lasted for one hour and 30 minutes.

Besides, the participants of the Tier 2 Program of the Project P.A.T.H.S. (i.e., the life and career development program adopting the positive youth development approach) during the academic years of 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 were invited to participate in the study. They were Secondary 3 students in a government-subsidized secondary school. There were 36 and 35 students joining the programs in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 respectively. All students were invited to participate in the focus groups, and 30 and 27 students from the two cohorts joined the focus groups respectively. Informed consent was obtained from both parents and students. Eight focus groups were formed within the two years.

The focus group interviews were conducted separately in different classrooms. The school social workers and program implementer assigned the students to different focus groups, with a balanced number of students between gender and class. There were around six to eight students in each group. The teachers and social workers did not stay in the classroom so that the students could talk more freely and openly. Each focus group was conducted by a trained researcher (i.e., the moderator of the focus group). The moderator conducted the focus group interview according to an interview guide (Appendix 2). The students were encouraged to share their experience and views of the Program. The focus group interviews lasted for one

hour. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, and the verbatim was transcribed by the student helpers.

## **Data Analysis**

A general qualitative approach was employed in this study (18). Theme analyses pattern coding was performed to analyze the factors contributing to the success of the program (19). In principle, the broad themes were extracted from the transcripts of the verbatim.

## **Results**

Six themes were extracted from the transcripts of the verbatim, namely 1) clear objectives and strong emphasis on psychosocial development, 2) diverse and creative program design, 3) experiential approach so that the participants could experience, reflect and learn, 4) quality of implementers and instructors, 5) continuous feedback from the participants, and 6) good timing for the launch of the program. Each theme will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **1. Clear objectives and strong emphasis on psychosocial development**

The non-governmental organization had prior experience in running life and career development programs, with a strong emphasis on enhancing adolescent psychosocial development. This facilitated the use of positive youth development approach in designing the Program. The paragraph below highlights a narrative of the implementer:

*Moderator: In what aspects do you think the life and career program in the Project P.A.T.H.S. enhances adolescent development?*

*Implementer: Project P.A.T.H.S. contains different components of adolescent development. The life and career planning program helps the adolescents enhance their self-understanding, and build their positive self-identity. It is expected that the Program would help the adolescents explore their strengths and value systems, which is related to a clear self-identity. The Program also reminds the adolescents to be self-confident. Another point is that the Program emphasizes how adolescents set their goals...their goals of their future. Throughout the Program, being aligned with the goal setting is the ability to make decisions, that means, the adolescents need to develop self-determination capacity so as to make a better choice for themselves.*

### **2. Diverse and creative program design**

The program design was innovative and diverse. The implementer and instructors meticulously designed the programs to meet the needs of the students:

*Implementer: We hope to provide a variety of programs for the students, especially more outings [outside activities] and adventure-based activities so that they can obtain more information from the outside, and gain more experience.*

Though the Program covered only eight sessions, there were different activities provided to the students. The programs included simulation games, adventure-based training, visits to enterprises, sharing sessions with the entrepreneurs, a “university hunt” cum a sharing session

with university students, simulated job interviews and an award presentation ceremony. The students' comments on each activity are listed below:

### *Simulation games*

The simulation games were activities designed by the non-governmental organization to simulate the real-life situations of the work environment and the society. For instance, the “mini society” was a simulation game in which the participants were involved in the activities taking place in the society, such as passing the public examinations, finding jobs, earning a salary, investing the shares, and buying houses, etc. The participants learnt the rules and patterns of the operation of the society, and at the same time experienced the unexpected changes and chaos. The participants then shared their experience and reflections after the games. The narratives below are some reflections of the students:

*Student A: I started to understand the importance of life planning. In the “mini society” game, it seemed that it was easy to perform the role, and I did not take it seriously. Eventually, I got bankrupt. And I totally lost all things. At that moment, I thought it was too difficult to be successful even in a game. In the real life, it was ten times more difficult. Not all things would run smoothly by themselves. Then I realized the importance of life planning. If I had not participated in the program, I would have never thought of life plans and I would be a termite of the society after graduation.*

*Student B: I have impressive experience in the life and career workshop. In the game, the bank went bankrupt. At that time, I learnt that we have to be alert to what is happening in the society, and cannot just blindly follow others to obtain something, like money... Because of the greed, they invested a lot, and eventually went bankrupt.*

*Student C: In the “mini society” game, because of my educational level, I was not entitled for a better job with a good prospect...When I realized that I could not earn adequate money to support my living, and failed to go to university, I was lost.*

*Student D: After the “mini society” game, I realized that I could not only have dreams and nothing else. Even if you have dreams, you have to see whether you have the conditions to fulfil the dreams. That's why we need to have life goals and plans.*

### *Adventure-based activities*

The non-governmental organization provided a one-day adventure-based training for the students. The program aimed to build the team spirit and cooperation among the students, and develop their resilience and problem-solving capacities. The narratives below highlight the experience and reflections of the students after the activities.

*Student E: In the adventure-based activity, I learnt to trust others. There was a high wall and we needed to climb over it. I thought it was more difficult than touching the sky.*

*Moderator: And you learnt to cooperate with others?*

*Student E: Yes.*

*Student F: It enhanced my self-confidence.*

*Moderator: Can you elaborate more?*

*Student F: Similar to Student E, when I climbed up the wall, I was very frightened. I have a phobia of heights. But the teammates raised me up. I didn't feel so frightened at that moment.*

*Moderator: Did other people help you?*

*Student F: Yes.*

*Student G: I learnt to be more active in problem-solving.*

*Moderator: Can you elaborate more?*

*Student G: Find ways. In the adventure-based program, we were in a team. We had to find ways to solve the problems. I shared my ideas on how we could solve the problems, and others also shared their views, and we modified our ideas together.*

### *Visits to local enterprises and sharing of the entrepreneurs*

The students had a chance to visit the enterprises and shared with the entrepreneurs. During 2014-2015, the students were arranged to visit a local hotel in Hong Kong and shared with the hotel manager. The students learnt more in the field of hospitality management. During 2015-2016, the students paid a visit to a local café in Hong Kong and shared with the owner. Also, they attended a leather product-making workshop and shared with the entrepreneur. The students were inspired by the spirit of entrepreneurship. The narratives below are some reflections from the students:

*Student H: I knew more about the job market. For instance, the hotel manager shared his work experience with us, and introduced the hospitality industry to us...This reminded me to think over what jobs I would choose in the future, and which subjects I should select.*

*Student I: In the visit to the café, the owner started his business by himself. His socio-economic background was not good at that time. But he succeeded. Now he has two cafés. He gave me courage to pursue my own dream.*

*Student J: In the handmade leather product workshop, not only I learnt how to use the leather to make different products, but also the instructor shared with us her experience, that is, we have to formulate our life goals.*

### *“University Hunt” and sharing of university students*

Using the adventure-based training approach, a visit to a university was modified as a program of “university hunt” to understand the university life. The students were asked to search for different checkpoints and to complete the assigned task at each checkpoint. Most of the tasks required the students to work together and approach the university students to share their university life. Furthermore, a visit to a student hostel and sharing with university students were arranged. The narratives below highlight the experience and reflections from the students:

*Student L : I like the program of “University Hunt”. My aspiration is to study in university. I obtained more information from the program, especially the university life. My classmates and I were particularly curious about the hall life...We also had a sharing session with the university students... about the curriculum, learning study life...My parents told me that the university life was the happiest time in the learning path. I also hope to experience that... In the program, I had a chance to experience as a university student. Our instructor provided a Powerpoint presentation in a lecture room, and I felt like having a lecture in the university.*

*Moderator: What did you learn in the program?*

*Student L : I learnt that we need to plan well so as to be admitted to the university.*

### *Simulated job interviews*

Steps of job application were introduced to the students. Students were requested to select a job and write their resume. A simulated job interview was arranged for each student. Feedback was given on the performance of the students. Moreover, the students also

performed the role of interviewer in the other classmates' interviews. By taking a reciprocal role, they learnt more on the seniors' expectation of recruiting new staff. The narratives below are the experience of a student:

*Student M : Before the job interviews, the instructor told us that we had to undertake three steps. The first is that you have to search what kind of jobs that you would like to apply. The second one is to write your resume. The last one is the job interview. We were assigned to different groups. We did the job interviews in different rooms. On top of the instructor, two students also performed the role of interviewer. And finally they gave me feedback.*

*Moderator: What kind of job did you apply?*

*Student M : Salesman.*

*Moderator: What did you learn in the experience?*

*Student M : To have eye contact. When they ask you questions, you have to respond tactfully.*

### **3. Experiential learning approach – students learnt from participation and experience**

Experiential learning approach was adopted in the Program. Students were required to participate in the activities and learnt from experience. Self-reflection and mutual sharing of the experience are crucial for the students to consolidate what they have learnt in the activities. The narratives below are the description of the implementer on the use of experiential learning approach.

*Moderator : What are the special features of the Program?*

*Implementer: I think that the Program contains diverse programs for the students. Some were implemented in school, and some brought the students outside the school and let them experience. Compared to the programs that only provide information to the students, this Program would make more changes in the students. It is because after the students experienced from the activities that they haven't tried before, they reflected on the [new] experience and listened to others' sharing. This is the real experience that they have, which is different from the materials that our agency or social workers "would impose" on them. I believe that this type of learning would generate more changes in the students.*

The students were impressed and benefited from participating in the activities and consolidating their experience through reflections. The narratives below highlight the views of the students.

*Student N: It is different from the previous programs that were conducted in school. Majority of the [previous] programs were that we sat down and listened to the speaker. But in this program, we gained experience on our own. True, we taste it by ourselves, and get in touch of our future. The materials and information made me feel clear about my future.*

*Student O: They really allowed us to experience by ourselves. For instance, in the program of the "university hunt", they let us explore on campus and find out the answers. And in the "mini society", they let us choose our life paths.*

### **4. Orientation and Quality of implementers**

The positive orientation and quality of the implementers constituted greatly to the success of the Program. The implementers had clear roles as program leaders. They focused mainly on the psychosocial development instead of vocational preparation of the students. They maintained good interactions with the students.

### *Clear role identification*

The implementers focused mainly on the psychosocial development instead of vocational preparation of the students, as described by the narratives of the implementer:

*Implementer: When talking about the needs of the students, in fact, I emphasize intrapersonal development of adolescents. This relates greatly to their academic performance, and their lives. How do the students perceive their self-identity? How do they plan for their life paths? This is the stage that they need to explore their lives. I, as an adult, need to give them right principles and positive attitudes, and enhance their vigor to make their own decisions and try them out. I think adolescents need to develop themselves.*

*Moderator : Can you share with us some of your consolidated experience in conducting this type of program?*

*Implementer: ...An important consideration is how we assess the needs of the students...The school approached us for life and career planning [program] as they discovered the needs of the students. You may know that the students were studying in Secondary 3. If you do walk in their shoes, what are the students' needs? Except the core need that the students have to choose their subjects for DSE, are there any other students' needs that the school seldom explores? Having adequate resources [provided by Project P.A.T.H.S.], we hoped to provide some new experience to the students that they have never had.*

### *Strength-based orientation*

Echoing the positive youth development paradigm of P.A.T.H.S., the implementers adopted the strength-based perspective to understand the students and enhance their competencies:

*Moderator : How do you describe the adolescents nowadays?*

*Implementer : The adolescents nowadays... I think they also want to make changes. They are a group of adolescents looking for changes. They have many creative and independent ideas, but many of them do not know how to express themselves.*

### *Caring role of the implementers*

The implementers emphasized the “peer” role in engaging and interacting with the students, which resulted in a supportive, caring and egalitarian implementer-participant relationship. The narratives below highlight the views of the implementer.

*Moderator: How do you describe your relationship with the students?*

*Implementer: Relationship with the students? It is positive...Although I am an implementer, I hope to take a “peer” role to share with the students... Still I had something that I insisted, such as the communication styles of the students and the program safety. I stood firm on these parts as these were related to the safety and politeness of the students. Other than these, I used a peer role to share with the students what they cared about, such as the university life. If the content did not go beyond some basic principles, I liked to share my experiences with them, hoping that they would understand more. I think this is why we can maintain a good positive relationship...I think [the attitude] to treat the students is a sense of mutual respect.*

In fact, the students appreciated the care and support from the implementers. The narratives below show their appreciation of the implementers.



*Student P : The instructor cared much about our future. On the way we left the hotel, she shared her experience with us of her aspiration when she was young. She told me that she wanted to be a hotel manager. But she found that hospitality management did not match her well, and thus she finally chose social work. Another instructor shared that she actually tried out a hotel manager, and shared her job experience to me.*

*Moderator: How did this affect you?*

*Student P : In the beginning, I did not expect that they did care about my future, and would share with me...But after that, I found that the program affected me a lot. They [the instructors] really cared about us. They worked hard for us, and let us understand ourselves and know more about different jobs. They did not want to see that we chose the jobs that we did not prefer at all.*

*Student Q: They [the instructors] were very pleasant. They always smiled and shared with us nicely. Though sometimes we were tired and snoozed, they never scolded us, just reminded us with a smile. I appreciate that.*

### *Responsible and devoted implementers*

The students were impressed by the implementers' effort to design and implement the Program. The implementers also performed as good role models for the students to learn and imitate. The narratives below highlight the views of the students:

*Student R: I found that all implementers [of the program] meticulously designed the programs for us, and I learnt a lot in the programs.*

*Student S: They [the implementers] were very devoted. They explained the information in detail. For example, the four steps of life and career planning...They always reminded us of these.*

*Student T: They [the implementers] were very attentive. They made a great effort to prepare the materials for us. This really influenced me. I may need to be attentive in my work, and never do things carelessly.*

## **5. Continuous feedback from the students**

The implementers constantly consulted the school teachers and students, and collected feedback from the students. The visits to the hotel and cafe were the results of suggestions of the teachers and students. This also reflected the egalitarian relationship and mutual respect among the implementers, school teachers and the students.

*Implementer: [We] continuously collected feedback from the students and then modified and adjusted our programs.*

## **6. Good timing – students need to select subjects for DSE**

Secondary 3 students were ready to participate in the life and career development program as they needed to select subjects for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (DSE). The students were misted in the selection of subjects as they understood that the selection was critical in their study and thus their future, yet they seldom thought of their life plans. The selection of subjects acted as a catalyst for the students to join the

Program and think over their life goals. The narratives below are the reflections of the students.

*Student U : Secondary 3 is a turning point. We need to know what is happening in our society. This would affect me. The Program helped me to find out my life goals, and the aspects that I need to explore more.*

*Student V: When I studied in Secondary 3, I found great changes in the curriculum between Secondary 2 and 3. And we have to select subjects (for DSE) at the end of the academic year. I had difficulties in doing it in a short period of time. I really did not know what was suitable for me. But after the program (life and career workshop) and going outside, I have more understanding of the outside world. I have some threads of what is suitable for me... I hope to make a right choice.*

*Moderator: What is the largest impact of the Program?*

*Student V: I start to think seriously about what I want to do in the future, that is, what I dream to do and my life goals. In the past, I was lost. I really did not know what was happening. But time flies. After the Program, I start to think over my dream and life goals.*

## **Discussion**

The study explored the factors that contributed to the success of a life and career planning program adopting a positive youth development approach from the perspectives of implementers and students. The factors comprised the hardware and software of the Program in promoting adolescent psychosocial competence and motivating them in life goal formulation. The hardware included the use of positive youth development approach in orientating and designing the Program, which reaffirmed the enhancement of psychosocial competence to be the main objective of life and career development. This also aligns with the essence of life career development that focuses on the development of life competencies, attitudes and values of individuals (20). Furthermore, the meticulous design of the program content, and the diverse and creative programs (such as simulation games, university hunt, adventure-based training, visits to the enterprises) also contributed to the hardware. These programs allowed dynamic interaction among the students, and between the students and other people. The programs also employed the experiential learning strategy (21) in the implementation. Experiential learning involves four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (21). The Program allowed the students to experience through participating in the activities. They reflected on their actions and reactions in the activities and shared their experience with other teammates, which in turn enhanced their self-understanding. When the students realized the importance of abstract concepts of life planning and positive youth development, they got the insights and tried out the new concepts in the real-life practice.

However, the Program would never succeed without the software. The software was the positive orientation and qualities of the implementers. They were the ones who engaged the students in the activities, passed the messages on to the students and acted as the change agent in the intervention process. Hence, it is essential for the implementers to have a clear orientation on the purpose and focus of life and career development, and hold positive angles on the strengths and potential of the adolescents. In the previous phases of the Program, adventure-based counseling has been shown to promote holistic youth development (22).

There are several theoretical and practical implications of the present findings. In the face of criticism that life and career development takes a peripheral role in motivating

adolescents in search of life goals, and focuses mainly on information dissemination (13), this Program serves as an exemplar of using positive youth development paradigm in the design and implementation of life and career development program, and this is novel in the practice. As suggested by Savickas et al. (23), the framework of career counseling and interventions should be life-long, holistic, contextual and preventive. Positive youth development approach that emphasizes adolescents' strengths, potential and competencies will serve as a constructive theoretical framework of the life and career development.

Practically, the study suggested the importance of the quality and orientation of the implementers to the success of a life and career program. In secondary schools, the career guidance personnel are the crucial persons who design, implement and monitor the life and career development programs in school. It is essential to equip them with a holistic positive youth development paradigm as well as the theoretical models of life and career development. Moreover, the career guidance personnel may need to take up more a caring role in engaging their students, and develop a trusting teacher-student relationship. Furthermore, the experiential learning approach increases the students' motivation and facilitates their learning through experience, reflection and sharing. The career guidance personnel may need to provide more experiential learning opportunities for the students to explore their career. Last but not least, the schools may need to cultivate a life-long and holistic orientation on adolescent development across all disciplines, and ensure that the teachers understand the primary focus of life and career development.

There are several limitations of the study. First, the findings were based on the qualitative data collected from one secondary school in Hong Kong. The school environment may be influential in determining the success of the Program. It is advised that the Program in other schools would be replicated and related evaluation studies would be conducted. Second, focus group interviews were conducted at one time point, i.e., in the last session of the Program. It is suggested that ongoing qualitative evaluation of the Program would be conducted. Third, peer checking and member checking were not performed due to the time and manpower constraints, and these may reduce the creditability of the study (18).

Despite the limitations, the study examined the successful factors of a life and career planning program using a positive youth development approach implemented in a secondary school in Hong Kong. It provides insights for educators, researchers and social workers into the further development of life and career planning in the context of Hong Kong.

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## **Appendix 1. Interview Guide of the interview of implementer**

### Program's rationale, ideas and framework

- How do you describe the needs and situations of Hong Kong adolescents nowadays?
- Do you agree with the rationale and framework of Project P.A.T.H.S.? Which parts do you agree? Which parts do you disagree?
- How did you design the framework and content of the life and career development program?
- How did you link up positive youth development and life and career planning?
- What do you think life and career planning is more related with the constructs of positive youth development?
- How did you demonstrate the constructs of positive youth development in the life and career planning program?

### Effectiveness of the Program

- To what extent did the Tier 2 program of Project P.A.T.H.S. help the psychosocial development of the participants? Please give some examples on your views.
- Did you find any changes in the participants after they joined the Project? If yes, what are the changes?
- In case there were changes in the participants, what are the factors that you perceive contributing to the changes?
- Did the changes meet the objectives?
- What were the intervention strategies that induced the changes?
- In case there were no changes in the participants, what are the reasons that you perceive?

### The implementation of the Program

- In the implementation of the Tier 2 program of Project P.A.T.H.S., what were the responses of the students in general? Can you give some examples?
- Can you share some of your experience and techniques for implementing the Program (such as training skills, instructor-participant relationships)?
- Did you have any difficulties in implementing the Tier 2 program of Project P.A.T.H.S.? If yes, please share some examples. How did you solve them?
- What are the features of the Program? Please give some examples to support your views.
- Do you think that the Program is a successful one? Please state your reasons.
- Based on your experience of conducting the Tier 2 program of Project P.A.T.H.S., what things should the implementers bear in mind?

### Overall comments

- Overall, how do you comment on the approach of the Tier 2 program of Project P.A.T.H.S.?
- What is your overall impression of the Program? Did you enjoy it?

## **Appendix 2. Interview Guide of the Focus Group for participants**

### Experience of students' participation in the program

- How did you realize this program? How did you enroll in the program?
- What were your expectations before you joined the program? From a retrospective view, how far did the program fulfill your expectations?
- In the program, which part did you like the most? Why?
- In the program, which part did you dislike the most? Why?
- Can you share an occasion/event that you think very impressive? What makes this occasion/event to be the most impressive one? What do you learn from the experience?
- Do you think you are involved in the program? Why or why not?

### Comments on the program process

- What are your comments on the instructors?
- What are your relationships with the instructors? Do you feel friendly with them?
- Did you know the groupmates before the program?
- Did you have any changes in the relationships with your groupmates? If yes, what are the changes?

### Comments on the program effectiveness

- What do you benefit the most from the program?
- Did you have any changes after participating in the program? If yes, what are the changes? What makes you have the changes?
- Do you think the program has helped your development? If yes, what are they?
- Do you think the program has helped your adjustment in your school life? If yes, what are they?

### Overall comments

- Overall, what do you appreciate the most in the program?
- Do you have any suggestions on how the program can be improved?
- If you are invited to use three descriptors to describe the program, what three words will you use?