

**The Effectiveness of Personal Development Opportunities at
the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Tsing Yi)**

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ABSTRACT

The Effectiveness of Personal Development Opportunities at the Hong Kong

Institute of Vocational Education (Tsing Yi)

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Personal development is the cornerstone of lifelong learning and academic and professional achievement. Co-curricular activities are good learning opportunities and support people to develop. A thorough review and examination of personal development education at HKIVE is needed so that new generations of students can more effectively learn and achieve their goals, enabling them to meet the crucial challenges of the 21st century.

Initially, the researcher examined course documents to identify the key areas of personal development education. Data was collected from 134 students, eight educators and six human resource practitioners so as to understand these issues deeply.

The study findings indicate that personal development opportunities at HKIVE are ineffective. The College should review existing personal development training to expand learning opportunities for students. Educators are advised to adopt innovative new learning strategies to facilitate personal development. No single training programme can cover all aspects of individual development and learning should be based on personal

needs and initiated by students. Furthermore, fostering good attitudes is a key factor in developing students' motivation to learn more. Peers also form an important resource to reinforce students' self-image and self-esteem within the peer group.

In addition, the new method of judging competency comprises: knowledge (Stratford, 1994), performance (Summerall, Lopez, Oehlert, 2000), outcome (Proctor, 1991), attitude and self-development. Finally, assessment issues are highly controversial and may serve formative, summative or normative purposes, subject to availability of resources and staff professionalism.

This study offers new personal development teaching ideas and a practical guide for educators. Moreover, this study formulates a new learning model for competency and informal learning - critical issues for the VTC in future research and development.

DEDICATION

To my family and friends who supported me throughout my work and helped me understand that through patience and hard work I can achieve my goals. I love you all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT	i
DEDICATION and ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Purpose and Significance of the Study.....	9
1.3 Personal Development Training at HKIVE	11
1.4 Background and Context of the Inquiry.....	15
1.5 Theoretical Framework.....	17
1.6 Assumptions.....	20
1.7 Limitations.....	20
1.8 Overview of the Study.....	21
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Introduction.....	23
2.2 Meaning of Learning.....	23
2.3 Personal Development.....	28
2.4 Providing Personal Development Education at HKIVE.....	42
2.5 HKIHRM Continuous Learning Recognition (CLR) Scheme.....	47
2.6 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).....	48
2.7 Competency-based learning	51
2.8 The Active Learning Model	55
2.9 Assessment.....	69
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Introduction.....	76

	<u>Page</u>
3.2 Research Assumptions.....	76
3.3 Data Collection and Procedure.....	79
3.4 Ethical Considerations.....	91

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction.....	93
4.2 Document Analysis.....	93
4.3 Survey Research Findings.....	101
4.4 Qualitative research findings: Educators.....	112
4.5 Qualitative research findings: Human Resource Practitioners.....	125

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction.....	136
5.2 Document Analysis.....	136
5.3 Analysis of Survey Research.....	140
5.4 Analysis of Personal Interviews with Educators.....	146
5.5 Analysis of Personal Interviews with Human Resource Practitioners.....	156
5.6 Summary.....	162

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE AT THE VTC

6.1 Introduction.....	165
6.2 Implications for Personal Development Policy.....	165
6.3 Implications for Teaching and Learning Approaches and Future Development.....	174

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction.....	197
7.2 The VTC.....	198
7.3 Academic.....	200
7.4 The Way Forward.....	207

	<u>Page</u>
BIBLIOGRAPHY	212
APPENDIX TABLE OF CONTENTS	231
A. Survey of the College Life, Competency Profile and Developmental Training Needs of Students at HKIVE.....	232
B. The Letter of Invitation for Survey Research.....	238
C. Interview Invitation Letter.....	239
D. Personal Interview Reply Form.....	240
E. Participant Consent Form.....	241
F. Personal Needs Survey (PNS).....	242
G. SI Personal Development Learning Plan (PDLP).....	244

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
Table 1: Responses regarding the effectiveness of personal development courses at HKIVE.....	16
Table 2: Overview of the Personal Competency Model.....	32
Table 3: Assessment process.....	69
Table 4: Survey research response rate.....	83
Table 5: Interviewee profiles (educators).....	86
Table 6: Interviewee profiles (human resource practitioners).....	87
Table 7: Assessment criteria for presentation.....	96
Table 8: Integrated Studies research findings.....	98
Table 9: Contact hours in personal education.....	100
Table 10: HKIVE college life satisfaction ratings.....	102
Table 11: Findings from survey research – Part I Q1.2 to 1.8.....	103
Table 12: Students’ perception of key competencies	105
Table 13: Students’ perception of course delivery of Key Skills.....	106
Table 14: Change of Mean Scores for each competency.....	107
Table 15: Student choices of training methods in the PDP.....	109
Table 16: Ranking activities to be enhanced in the next 3 years.....	110
Table 17: Students’ views on the Structure of Personal Development Programme.....	111
Table 18: Views on competencies from Human Resources Practitioners.....	127
Table 19: Teaching methodologies to deliver personal education at HKIVE.....	137
Table 20: Degree of satisfaction at different course level.....	141
Table 21: Students’ views of Key Skills within top 5 level.....	143
Table 22: Comparative table of student views on the top three competencies.....	144
Table 23: Personal Competency Model 2006 adapted from Murdock’s PCM frame	150
Table 24: Co-curricular activities / Active Learning Model to be integrated into the SWPD.....	153
Table 25: Comparison of the competency requirements for college and at workplace.....	158
Table 26: Curriculum design (for co-curricular activities).....	176
Table 27: The Personal Competency Model for the Supplemental Instruction Programme.....	182

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
Figure 1: Kolb and Fry Learning Cycle.....	25
Figure 2: A cyclical model of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman et al., 1996).....	36
Figure 3: Data linkage.....	88
Figure 4: The Structured Whole Person Development Programme (SWPD).....	116
Figure 5: Selection criteria in recruitment	157
Figure 6: The Restructured Whole Person Development Programme (RWPD).....	172
Figure 7: Modern strategies to develop people.....	204

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the 21st century, the world is undergoing unprecedented change through globalisation and technological advance. To meet these new challenges, a new education system - known as “3+3+4” - was proposed by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Education and Manpower Bureau in 2000. The new system, to be implemented in 2009, has the following aims:

To enable every person to attain all-round development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics according to his/her own attributes so that he/she is capable of life-long learning, critical and exploratory thinking, innovating and adapting to change; filled with self-confidence and a team spirit; willing to put forward continuing effort for the prosperity, progress, freedom and democracy of their society, and contribute to the future well-being of the nation and the world at large. (Education Commission 2000, p.4)

Education holds the key to the all-round development of a person and prepares him/her for work and life. Education nurtures talents for the society and promotes its prosperity and progress. In an ever-changing society, it is imperative that our education system keeps pace with the times and be responsive to the needs of learners (Education Commission 2000, p.27). The Education Commission also recommends the provision of ‘a broad senior secondary curriculum to enable students to acquire experiences in various

key learning areas, construct a broad knowledge base and enhance their ability to analyze problems' (Education Commission 2000, p.100). In addition, the review outlined the aims of a three-year senior secondary academic education:

The ability to create, acquire, and apply new knowledge has become the key to competitive edge for any regions, trade, organizations and persons. Capacity for self-learning and the ability to adapt, create, communicate and cooperate with the others have proven to be the essential qualities for any persons to survive in the society. Self-confidence, perseverance, integrity, horizon, vision and commitment are qualities which underline the sustained progress of any community. Hence, it is incumbent upon secondary education to lay a strong foundation for students; lifelong learning and all-round development through providing an ideal environment for students to build a broad and sound knowledge base, develop higher-order thinking and cultivate a self-learning attitude. (Curriculum Development Council 2003, p.6)

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Vocational Training Council (VTC) embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning exercise in March 2002 to develop measures and techniques to be incorporated in the new education system.

The VTC 8-Year Strategic Plan

The Vocational Training Council (VTC) 8-Year Strategic Plan 'is committed to student-focused, multi-disciplinary education. Ensuring that each student has a positive learning outcome and a meaningful learning experience is a priority. The VTC strives to produce

all-round graduates with sound disciplinary knowledge and well-developed ‘Key Skills’ for life-long learning and employment.’ (VTC 2007d Strategic Plan 2003/04 – 2010/11, p.5)

According to progress report on the Education Commission’s implementation issued in June 2003, the development of higher education includes the reform of admission criteria to encourage the all-round development of students, progressive reform of the curriculum to enhance student development (Education Commission 2003, p.8-9). The participation in post-secondary education should be increased to cover 66 % (of the relevant age-cohort in the 2005/2006 academic year), with the emergence of many self-financed Higher Diploma courses (Education Commission 2006, p.10-11). The VTC, being the leading provider of vocational education and training in Hong Kong, is actively supporting the government to meet learning needs. However, the VTC will have to compete with the other service providers for the same pool of students.

Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (HKIVE) is under Vocational Training Council to provide pre-employment and in-service education and training for the age group seventeen to twenty-two. HKIVE is restructuring from the 2004 academic year onwards to cope with learning needs. As stated in VTC 8-Year Strategic Plan, ‘for D/HD courses, it is estimated that about 40% of the courses (mainly Information Technology and Business) would become self-financed by 2010-11. This will be implemented incrementally over the 8-year period’ (VTC 2007d, p.13). HKIVE faces a new challenge to reposition in the education sector i.e. changing from a fully government subsidised college to partly privatised college by providing self-financing courses to

learners. Such changes will impact greatly on all staff. How can HKIVE survive and follow the new reforms? The VTC 8 Year Strategic Plan is devised to make sure HKIVE will have a competitive edge in higher education after 2004. Therefore, the VTC 8-Year Strategic plan was about creating opportunities and a good learning environment which cater for the needs of students, and support whole-person development. The three strategic objectives are to:

- Provide an array of extra curricular opportunities and support for student to develop Key Skills
- Provide a comprehensive range of student support and development services to meet student needs
- Provide a physical environment conducive to student-centered teaching methods

There are many questions though. Most importantly, how does IVE implement education reform and maintain its position as a leading provider of vocational education and training, providing high quality courses to enhance learners' employability skills and lifelong learning attitudes?

The Economy and Lifelong Learning

When the economy is stable, lifelong learning may seem not so important. However, when times are tough, especially when labour supply is greater than demand, lifelong learning plays a crucial role in the labour market. Cropley argues that:

“Lifelong education, conceptualized as a means for facilitating lifelong learning, would

1. last the whole life of each individual;
2. lead to the systematic acquisition, renewal, upgrading and completion of knowledge, skills and attitudes, as become necessary in response to the constantly changing conditions of modern life, with the ultimate goal of promoting the self-fulfillment of each individual;
3. be dependent for its successful implementation on people’s increasing ability and motivation to engage in self-directed learning activities;
4. acknowledge the contribution of all available educational influences including formal, non-formal and informal sources.

This approach as can be seen, focuses on the duration of lifelong education (the entire lifespan), the factors in life making it necessary (change), the personal characteristics it seeks to foster in individual people (self-directed learning, motivation, etc.), and the comprehensiveness of the influences acknowledged as acting upon learning (formal, non-formal and informal).” (Cropley 1980, p.3-4)

This notion focuses on continuous learning through entire lives. The possibility (or the reality) of lifelong change, and possible upheavals, makes new learning a necessity to secure a life with good prospects, perhaps even for survival itself. This provides an impetus for personal development and the development of new abilities and opportunities. Changes in employment demand the acquisition of new knowledge, new skills and new attitudes. Changes in social roles involve new learning and new status. To consider these

issues further, I will briefly compare lifelong learning in Hong Kong with England and the United States, both of which have implications for the Hong Kong system.

Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, lifelong learning was addressed in a consultation document “Review of Education System: Framework for Education Reform – Learning for Life, Education Blueprint for the 21st Century” (September 1999). One of the main principles of this proposed reform is a society-wide mobilisation:

Lifelong learning is the key to person’s success, and to Hong Kong’s success. The Government, educators, all sectors of the community as well as the learners themselves should all contribute to the reform. (Education Commission 2000, p.1-11)

This implies that the Hong Kong Government believes learning creates opportunities especially when the society changes constantly. Hong Kong’s economy has shifted from manufacturing to a knowledge-based one; the industrial society has transformed into an information society. Therefore, new knowledge gives Hong Kong a competitive edge in the global market and should bring new opportunities, spurring economic development. However, as noted in the Education Commission Report (2000), describing:

School life in Hong Kong is usually monotonous, students are not given comprehensive learning experiences and have little room to think, explore and create. The pathways for lifelong learning are not as smooth as they should be. To make this

weakness, we need to uproot outdated ideology and develop a new education system that is student-focused. (Education Commission Report 2000, p.29)

England

In England, prior to June 2007, lifelong learning was supported by the Access to Learning for Adults Division of the Department for Education and Skills. In July 2003, the Department for Education and Skills launched a consultation paper on “21st Century Skills, Realising Our Potential (Individual, Employers and Nation)”, explaining:

The aim of this national Skills Strategy is to ensure that employers have the right skills to support the success of their business, and individuals have the skills they need to be both employable and personally fulfilled.

(The Secretary of State for Education and Skills 2003, p.8)

This document argues that there is a need to link individual quality, knowledge, employability skills with economic success, productivity and competitiveness. This implies that people must have a good foundation of knowledge before entering the workforce. However, over time, skills become outdated and learning is no longer only the prerogative of those aged 5 to 19. The British government encourages adults to learn, improve their skills and enrich their lives through formal, informal or non-formal learning. This also underlines the importance of adult education.

United States

Pittman, Yohalem and Tolman (2003) discuss lifelong learning in the US context:

To successfully educate youth today, the U.S. education system cannot be based solely on schooling; it must also include a focus on free-choice and workplace learning. In fact, there is growing evidence that the more the three educational sectors of school, work, and free-choice learning overlap seamlessly in youth's lives, the more likely they are to become successful lifelong learners. Each of the three components – formal schooling, the workplace, and free-choice learning sectors – needs to be engaged and working together toward common goals. (Pittman, Yohalem and Tolman 2003, p.85)

In Hong Kong, there is a clear commitment to more student-focused activities and multi-disciplinary education to develop students' interest in learning. Positive learning outcomes and meaningful learning experiences are the key priorities addressed in the 8-Year Strategic Plan. In response, the VTC has revised the existing curriculum and will launch the Structured Whole Person Development (SWPD) Programme in 2007 focusing on personal development.

The issue of the effectiveness of personal development education is a key one, as this study will show. Heitler argues:

School programs should provide experiences that further the total development of individual students... Non-academic programs can be as important as academic

programmes in facilitating the development of the individual. One means of influencing adolescents and promoting healthy adolescent development is through extracurricular activities offered by their schools. (Heitler 2004, p.13)

1.2 Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine personal development opportunities at the HKIVE, specifically the Tsing Yi Business Services and Management Department, in order to identify possible ways to improve the current curriculum and develop new learning opportunities for students. The study is centered on three main research questions:

1. To what extent do our courses provide personal development opportunities to students?
2. What methods are employed to assist students to identify their competency and developmental training needs?
3. What kinds of support facilitate students' personal development?

There has been little research into personal development education at the vocational training level. There is no accessible, official data from the VTC concerning the effectiveness of personal development education. This fresh research, using multiple sources (including course documents, questionnaires and interviews), was carried out to ascertain the real effectiveness of personal development training at HKIVE. Professional input on how to improve current personal development training was also sought. This new study achieves the following:

1. Provides a basis for improving the current personal education system.
2. Develops new teaching techniques for those involved in co-curricular activities at vocational training level or post-secondary level.
3. Provides an important resource for curriculum planners and education administrators in Hong Kong responsible for adult education, and help develop new teaching and learning strategies.
4. Assists the design of personal competency inventories, personal needs surveys (PNS) and Personal Development Learning Plans (PDLP) for extra-curricular activities, aligned with the Vocational Training Council mission and the new '3+3+4' education system.
5. Provides an important resource for interested stakeholders to explore ways to assess students' performance in extracurricular activities, through participation and reflection.
6. Identifies the key components of competence, including knowledge (Stratford, 1994), performance (Summerall, Lopez, Oehlert, 2000), outcome (Proctor, 1991), attitude and self-development.

1.3 Personal Development Training at HKIVE

HKIVE operates under the aegis of the VTC and is subject to its parent organisation's vision, mission, core values and strategic objectives:

Vision: to be a leading provider of vocational education and training in the region.

Mission: to provide cost-effective and flexible alternative pathways for school learners and adult learners to acquire skills and knowledge for lifelong learning and enhanced employability.

Core Values:

- To serve with integrity
- To be client-focused
- To strive for excellence
- To be entrepreneurial
- To forge partnerships with stakeholders

Strategic objectives:

- To improve the quality, relevance and responsiveness of its vocational education and training programmes
- To enhance productivity, cost-efficiency and flexibility in operations
- To maximize existing and future market opportunities
- To achieve a high level of staff involvement and increase their capability to deal

with changes (VTC 2007d at <http://intra.vtc.edu.hk/strategic-planning/8-Year>)

According to the VTC, the relationship between the VTC and HKIVE is as follows:

Established under the Vocational Training Council Ordinance in 1982, the Vocational Training Council (“VTC”) is the largest provider of vocational education and training in Hong Kong providing young people and employees of various sectors with cost-effective and comprehensive system of vocational education and training that meets the dynamics of the economy. Offering diversified pre-employment and in-service training to over 160,000 students and trainees each year, VTC operates the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (“IVE”), the School of Business and Information Systems (“SBI”), the Hong Kong Design Institute (“HKDI”), 15 Training and Development Centres (“T & D Centres”), the Youth College (“YC”), the VTC Yeo Chei Man Senior Secondary School, the Institute of Professional Education And Knowledge (“PEAK”), the School for Higher and Professional Education (“SHAPE”) and three Skills Centres. It also administers apprenticeship and other training schemes.

(VTC 2007a at <http://www.vtc.edu.hk/About VTC>)

HKIVE provides pre-employment and in-service education and training for 17 to 22 year olds. These students are moving from adolescence to adulthood. This involves important physical changes, emotional and sexual development, gender identity issues, career choices, peer group membership and increased autonomy from parents (Harms 2005, p.76 Figure 4.1). According to Steinbery, Almeida and Allen:

for most young people, entry into high school marks the start of their transition from adolescence to adulthood. Their success at navigating this transition will determine whether by their mid-twenties, they have obtained the education and credentials to advance to family-supporting career. Ideally, the coming-of-age years from fifteen to twenty-four are a time when young people become confident, competent learners as they solidify academic, interpersonal, and social skills.

(cited in Pittman, Yohalem and Tolman 2003, p.29)

So we can ask: how well does HKIVE help students to navigate that transition from adolescence to adulthood so they become confident and competent learners? How effective are courses in supporting the development of interpersonal skills and social skills?

In this study, only the business courses provided by the HKIVE (Tsing Yi) campus are examined. HKIVE (Tsing Yi) is one of nine HKIVE campuses. In the 2004/2005 academic year, HKIVE (Tsing Yi) provided Higher Diploma courses in Corporate Administration and Systems, Business Promotion and Event Management, Business Information Systems, Transport and Logistics and Enterprise Management. The HKIVE (Tsing Yi) Students Handbook states:

The IVE provides students with high quality, internationally acceptable vocational education, training and qualifications which are directly applicable to the requirements of Hong Kong's employers and the community. (VTC, 2005)

The VTC and HKIVE (Tsing Yi) have the common goal of improving students' employment prospects by providing post-secondary vocational education and instilling employability skills that are easily transferred to the workplace after graduation. Senior managements' performance indicators assess students' performance and organizational effectiveness as follows:

Student Performance Results

- P18 Retention Rate/Completion Rate
- P19 Pass Rate

Organisational Effectiveness Results

- P14 Number of Planned Vocational Education and Training Places
- P15 Enrolment Rate
- P16 Employment Rate

(VTC 2007c at <http://intra.vtc.edu.hk> / Quality Assurance Unit)

These indicators focus on intake, knowledge training and employability skills. A cursory glance at these indicators may lead some to suspect that staff members lack concern over personal development and learning support issues. In fact, these teaching skills and this knowledge comprise some of the key attributes and interests of VTC academic staff. Student personal development falls under the remit of the Student Affairs Office (SAO) and the SAO mission statement is as follows:

The Student Affairs Office takes care of the non-academic aspects of students' life. Believing in human potentiality and aiming at developing the bio-psycho-social well-being of young people, this Unit is committed to helping students achieve their full potential. (HKIVE/TY 2007a at <http://www.vtc.edu.hk/ive/ty/SAO>)

How effective is the department in helping students achieve their full potential? A key aim of this study is to investigate key aspects of students' college life, personal development curricula, and learning styles at HKIVE (Tsing Yi) and explore personal development opportunities. In the study, educators and human resource practitioners were also invited to provide professional insights to strengthen the provision of personal development education at the vocational training level.

1.4 Background and Context of the Inquiry

Today, learning is not just conducted in class and has always been largely an informal activity. Indeed, it has been posited lifelong learning requires the development of both formal and non-formal education (Oduaran, 2003:20). Students can take advantage of both formal and informal learning opportunities. Internationally, there has been a growing interest in educational strategies that cater for personal and social needs, through a broad range of experiences, in the workplace and in communities, and also ways these opportunities can be maximised through mentoring, learning sets, personal developmental plans and personal learning journals (Winstanley 2005, p.25). This is relevant to educational strategies at HKIVE (Tsing Yi) that cater for the personal and social needs of students. Normally, student interviews are conducted on half-yearly basis

and one of the areas discussed is the knowledge and skills acquired at college, to ascertain student perception of learning opportunities offered by HKIVE (Tsing Yi). According to HKIVE students interviews conducted in January 2005, 86% students strongly believe HKIVE courses can help them in their personal development. However, 14% of students believed HKIVE courses were not practical or effective in helping them gain ideal employment (see Table 1 below).

Question: ‘Do you think that the knowledge and skills you learnt from the course can help you in your future personal development?’

Course	HDTL ¹	HDBPEM ²	HDBIS ³	HDCAS ⁴	HDEM ⁵	Total
Agree	204	153	173	101	69	700
Disagree	23	55	22	6	13	119

Table 1: Responses regarding the effectiveness of personal development courses at HKIVE

According to the results on Table 1, 14% of students view our courses as ineffective, implying the courses still have room for improvement. Alan Rogers in “What’s the difference?” (2004), argues that effective teaching of adults can be achieved if teachers understand adults’ natural learning practices and processes and the identities they are creating. Therefore, what do HKIVE teaching staff members understand about students learning processes? At the departmental staff retreat of September 6, 2004, staff highlighted the following student concerns:

1 HDTLS: Higher Diploma in Transport and Logistics Studies
 2 HDBPEM: Higher Diploma in Business Promotion and Event Management
 3 HDBIS: Higher Diploma in Business Information Systems
 4 HDCAS: Higher Diploma in Corporate Administration and Systems
 5 HDEM: Higher Diploma in Enterprise Management

- Low social status
- Poor earning power
- Uncertain personal goal
- Lack of self-confidence (HKIVE 2004a, Departmental Staff Retreat Report)

If a majority of students think that our course can help them in future personal development, why do our staff still think HKIVE students are lacking in confidence, have unclear personal goals and are concerned about low social status? This motivated the researcher to explore ways to improve personal development opportunities at HKIVE.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Students' learning is affected by the learning environment. Sanford notes that there is a relationship between college environments and student development (Evan 1998, p.7). Pittman, Yohalem and Tolman (2003, p.33-34) also state that an effective learning environment includes:

- Caring, respectful relationships that help young people build an attachment to the learning environment and their persistence in the face of obstacles.
- Cognitive challenges that engage young people in learning critical skills and applying those skills to complex and authentic problems.
- Community membership and a sense of voice in a group where dialogue is valued.
- Connections to post-secondary learning opportunities and credentials.
- Culture of peer support for high-quality work.

The inculcation of these “5C’s” in the teaching process and the learning environment can effectively engage and educate young people. As the largest vocational education provider in Hong Kong, how can HKIVE create an experiential learning environment and cognitive challenges? Do the existing HKIVE courses provide an appropriate community and support system to help students explore further learning opportunities? Do students understand that they can learn from their peers? Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993, p.6) note that ‘experience is not just an observation, a passive undergoing of something, but an active engagement with the environment, of which the learner is an important part.’ They go on to suggest that while learners construct their own experience, they do so in the context of a particular social setting and range of cultural values; learners do not exist independently of their environment. Learning does not exist in isolation from social and cultural norms and values. Furthermore, they also state that engagement in learning tasks is related to belief in success. The extent to which we can change is often a function of the supportiveness of the environment we can create for ourselves. We need, as learners, appropriate support, trust and challenge from others to build self-belief and a capacity to learn and to change.

The learning environment and social context have big impacts in learning and development. Goal-setting also affects self-development and self-satisfaction. ‘Goal setting is closely aligned with motivation. Most people never set goals. Of those who do, less than five percent actually write their goals down. It is a small percentage of people who have a purpose in life to which they can be committed’ (Gerson and Gerson 2006, p.45). Brandtstadter and Lerner (1999, p.187) note that ‘the pursuit and accomplishment

of personal goals plays an important role in the development and maintenance of individuals' emotional well-being and satisfaction with life.'

A number of studies have shown that striving for meaningful objectives is crucial to good mental health throughout life. Individuals prefer taking action towards their own developmental goals, such as a career goal to strive for, when opportunities provided by biological resources and societal support systems (e.g. education, parental or state support) are at their maximum. Without a goal, learners may have a limited idea of the reasons why they pursue their goal, and how to achieve it. Educators should encourage students to join charity activities to benefit society; these are meaningful learning activities and help encourage a habit of serving the community.

Therefore, another focus of this research is students' lifespan, ambition, and related personal goals (such as career related issues). What kind of activities have been developed or will be developed at HKIVE to help students' goal setting and career planning? Key aspects of the learning environment, teaching and training strategies, and goal setting are examined and discussed in this study. In order to make the research more realistic and balance the study, professional opinions are drawn upon too. These findings can be used to develop a Teaching Guide for student personal development at HKIVE (Tsing Yi).

1.6 Assumptions

Regarding this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. The participating students represent the population of students at the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, Department of Business Services and Management (Tsing Yi).
2. The selected panel of educators has the expertise to provide views on competency, active learning strategies, and personal development training and support at a vocational training level.
3. The panel of human resource practitioners has the expertise necessary to identify competencies required of college leavers and provide cogent views on personal development training in vocational training.
4. The participating panel of experts accurately represents the field of expertise generally.

1.7 Limitations

The study has four limitations:

1. The findings are based on survey of Tsing Yi campus only, allowing ease of access for the researcher who is a full time member of staff at this campus. The sample of

students represents those studying at the Department of Business Services and Management, HKIVE (Tsing Yi) during research period.

2. Course document analysis at the proposal stage was not carried out at the same time as the interview period. Some courses that existed in 2004/2005 academic year were phased out in the 2006/2007 academic year when the personal interview being conducted. Therefore, some feedback by informants regarding courses does not exactly match up with the previous course document analysis.

3. The personal competency inventory in this study is only applicable to the learning support programme.

4. The Teaching Guide may only apply to Hong Kong at post secondary school level because of the geographical scope of the study.

1.8 Overview of the study

The background and context of personal development training at HKIVE are firstly explored, as well as the purpose and significant of the study, including theoretical framework, assumptions, and limitations.

Chapter Two reviews the literature on learning, discusses the concept of personal development education, and the means of providing personal development education at HKIVE. Also discussed are the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management

(HKIHRM) Continuous Learning Recognition (CLR) scheme and approach of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Competency-based learning, the active learning model and assessment are also explored.

Chapter Three discusses research methodology, research assumptions, data collection strategies and the ethical considerations of this study. The research findings and a full analysis are presented in Chapters Four and Five. Implications for policy and practice are presented in Chapter Six. Teachers' guide, practical examples, the curriculum plan, assessment issues and improvements are also discussed in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven provides brief conclusions relevant to the work of the Vocational Training Council - the importance of co-curricula activities to support personal development. Furthermore, new ideas in learning and competency from an academic perspective are also addressed in Chapter Seven.

This study offers innovative ideas around the co-curricular activities and personal development and inspires and equips stakeholders - including the Council, employers, educators, learners, the Education Manpower Bureau and Hong Kong education providers – to explore these issues further and spur action.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of related literature, exploring the basic ideas behind the learning process, personal development education and the active learning model. There are nine sections in this chapter, beginning with an introduction and followed by discussions of the meaning of learning and the content of personal education in the next two sections. Personal development training at HKIVE is explored in section four. The framework provided by the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management (HKIHRM) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) is presented in sections five and six. In section seven, the competency-based learning model and a sample training programme are discussed. Other active teaching and learning strategies, such as action learning, project learning, flexible learning and collaborative learning are explored in section eight. Finally, the ninth section comprises a discussion of basic ways to assess students' personal development.

2.2 Meaning of Learning

What does learning mean? Joy-Matthews, Megginson and Surtees (2004, p.92) describe how the process of learning links 'outcomes and processes'. Intended outcomes are an individual's goals, and these goals are a vital component of any planned learning activity. Achieved outcomes lead to increased capabilities, and these reflect the nature, variability and intensity of the tasks and opportunities discovered in new and different situations.

Michael and Modell (1993) state how:

learning is a change in behavior that results from the learner's interaction with the environment (experience). Recent advances in cognitive science are beginning to provide us with some general principles, applicable in education, that should facilitate learning..... Collaborative or cooperative effort can yield more individual learning than individual effort alone. Articulating explanations, whether to peers, teachers, or one's self, facilitates learning. (Michael and Modell 1993, p.3)

Thus a collaborative learning model involving the student, peers and teachers can facilitate learning.

Kolb's experiential learning model provides two contrasting notions of learning:

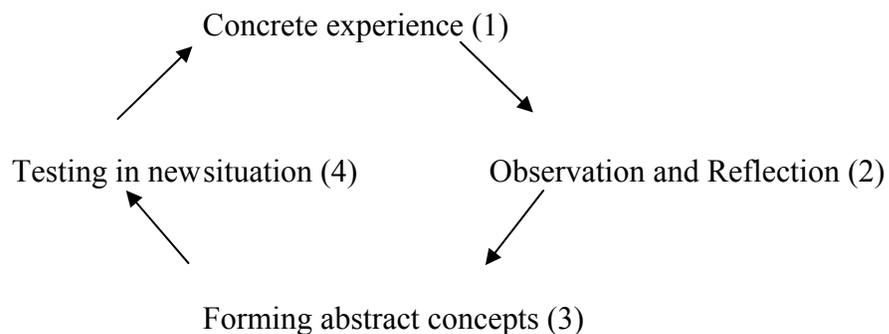
1. Experiential learning explores and applies knowledge, learning processes and skills in an immediate and relevant setting. This sort of learning is supported by a college or institute and might be used in training programmes for professions such as social work and teaching.

2. Experiential learning is 'education that occurs as a direct participation in the events of life' (Houle 1980:221). Here learning is not inculcated by formal educational institutions but by people themselves. It is learning that is achieved through reflection upon everyday experience and is the way that most people learn.

(See David a. Kolb, *infed* online resources at <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-explrn.htm>)

Kolb provides insights into education in a formal institution (such as HKIVE) that provides courses that foster further learning initiated by students themselves. Both institutional support and self-exploration are crucial components in learning and development. Kolb and Fry (1975) argue that the learning cycle can begin at any one of the four points (see Figure 1), and suggest that the learning process often begins with an individual testing out a particular action and then assessing the effects:

Figure 1: Kolb and Fry Learning Cycle



Source: *infed* online resources <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-explrn.htm>

Kolb discusses important ideas about how people learn in formal or informal settings throughout life, using continuous self-reflection to learn from concrete experiences.

Joyce and Calhoun (1996), describe how

learning experiences are composed of content, process and social climate. As educators, we strive to create for and with our children opportunities to explore and

build important areas of knowledge, to develop powerful tools for learning, and to live in humanising social conditions. (Joyce and Calhoun 1996, p.xi)

Summarising all the selected literature, learning has the following meanings: linking outcome and process (Joy-Matthews 2004); learning is a change in behaviour (Michael and Modell 2003); learning in formal and informal setting, through reflection (Kolb and Fry 1975); and learning is composed of content, process and social climate (Joyce and Calhoun 1996).

How can learning apply to personal development? Sanford describes how ‘learning involves the whole individual development and developmental changes through interaction with the environment.’ He also states that ‘true education was fundamentally about this kind of development – namely, the evolution of individuals’ thinking structures and meaning-making toward greater and more adaptive complexity’ (Hofer and Pintrich 2002, p.26). Sanford (1969) outlines some key ideas of personal development:

- Personal development involves “the organization of increasing complexity”, and thus is distinct from simple notions of “change” or “growth”.
- It involves the whole individual – in development, intellect, emotion, and action are all inseparable and in interaction.
- It is progressive: a succession of developmental changes takes place.
- It reflects an interaction between the person and the environment.

(Hofer and Pintrich 2002, p.26)

Patterson (2005) presents the student development equation $B = f(P \times E)$ at the Canadian Institute of Student Affairs and Services to explore how behaviour (learning) is related to the way people interact with their environment (Nifakis and Barlow, 2007, p.3).

Cotton (1995) also notes how learning, competency and skills can become a part of the personality and learners who achieve skills, competency and knowledge will incorporate this learning into their self-image. Personality is described by Cotton as ‘the characteristic patterns of behaviour, thought and emotion which determine the way a person adjusts to the environment’ (Cotton 1995, p.13).

To conclude, learning can change behaviour, thought and emotion. People learn from process and experience, involving whole individual development to become a component of personality. Knowledge, skills and competencies are achieved so as to build up self-image. ‘Approaches to learning’ or ‘methods of learning’ can facilitate learning. In summary, Joy-Matthews outlines components of learning, Michael explains methods of learning and Kolb discusses experiential learning and the learning cycle. Sanford also discusses learning as development, Patterson formulates a student development equation to explore these issues, and Cotton discusses personality and learning. All these components comprise the basis of this study.

2.3 Personal Development

Education

In Hong Kong, personal development education is a key learning area of Personal, Social and Humanities Education for secondary school students aged from 12 to 19. As outlined by the Education and Manpower Bureau, personal development is an area of Personal Growth Education which aims to promote personal education, whole-personal development and lifelong learning. This enables students to attain balanced development in ethics, intellect, physique, social skills, critical and exploratory thinking, innovation, flexibility, and thus prepares them to meet all the challenges of adulthood. Personal Growth Education can help the individual to fulfill their potential, enhance problem solving skills, develop a positive self-image and adopt a positive attitude towards the challenges. Personal development is one of four learning targets in the Personal Growth curriculum, and focuses on the following:

- a) Self-concept: learn and accept personal character traits, make full use of one's strengths and improve on weak areas;
- b) Problem-solving: apply problem-solving skills to meet the challenges; and
- c) Self-development: master knowledge, skills and attitudes.

(Education and Manpower Bureau 2004b, p.3)

In the secondary school sector, self development and problem-solving are the learning focus in personal development education. As discussed by Zimmerman, Bonner and Kovach (1996, p.10), 'no single strategy will work for all students, and few strategies can be implemented fully during the first effort.' As students move through the educational

system from elementary school to college, increased choice and freedom is offered and more self-regulation and responsibility is expected of them. Zimmerman notes the importance of self monitoring and self-evaluation in enabling students to learn in the most effective way. Colleges should provide suitable in study strategies, as students are often unable to personally devise suitable techniques to improve their self-monitoring, and hence self-evaluations inevitably suffers (Zimmerman et al. 1996, p.10).

The concept of personal education is also defined by Best et al. (1996, p.3), where a number of concepts are identified, including pastoral care, affective education, guidance, counseling and personal and social education (PSE). In addition, as addressed in the inspection report of 1987-8, pastoral care is about pupils' personal and social development, and fostering positive attitudes:

through the quality of teaching and learning; through the nature of relationships amongst pupils, teachers and adults other than teachers, through arrangement for monitoring pupils' overall progress, academic, personal and social; through specific pastoral structures and support systems; and through extra-curricular activities and the school ethos. Pastoral care, accordingly, should help a school to achieve success. In such a context it offers support for the learning, behaviour and welfare of all pupils, and addresses the particular difficult-pupils may be experiencing.

(DES 1989 cited in Lo 2003, p.23)

The above definition outlines how personal development education provides support for learning and helps students monitor academic, personal and social progress using pastoral structures and support systems, and through extracurricular activities. Best et al. (1996, p.15-16) also further describe pastoral care as follows:

Pastoral Care is a very comprehensive concept, expressing a commitment to the welfare, well-being and fullest development of the individual. Pring can argue that to be involved in education is necessarily to be involved in personal and social development. That is why Wakins calls for schools to seek a whole curriculum approach which is genuinely whole-pupil, which relates to their needs and covers time-honored rather than politically fashionable themes which presently come under a range of titles.

In Hong Kong, using the above definition, personal education supports learning. As stated in the previous chapter, employability is a crucial indicator of individual achievement and the VTC's success. Students are likely to treat career development as a top priority upon graduation. Brandtstadter and Lerner (1999, p.187) discuss how 'the pursuit and accomplishment of personal goals play an important role in the development and maintenance of individuals' emotional well-being and satisfaction with life'. McNamara (1999, p.98) notes 'the achievement of realistic goals can be reinforcing to the students and may have the effect of leading the pupil to set higher targets in the future'. With clear goal setting, students are motivated to learn intrinsically, to fulfill their targets. As a vocational education provider, HKIVE can help students monitor their own progress and develop career goals, enhancing self-esteem and positive attitudes.

Development of generic skills

The Education and Manpower Bureau has developed personal development training to develop the generic skills necessary for lifelong learning. The learning processes involved in co-curricular activities help students raise questions after reflection, or through communication and collaboration with others, and find solutions using their own initiative (Education Manpower Bureau 2004b, p.4). Extracurricular activities are vital to help develop generic skills such as communication and interpersonal skills, and problem-solving techniques through participation. Kember (2008) also notes that:

Generic capabilities are nurtured if programmes and the curriculum provide learning activities which require the deployment of the capability in question.

(Kember 2008, p.15)

Weightman (1994) argues that:

Competencies are taken to mean more than just the skills necessary to do the job; they are seen as clusters of skills, knowledge and values. Lists of competencies can also include personal attributes, such as self-confidence, and mindsets, such as pro-activity. The competencies in most studies are based on observations, interviews and statistical evaluation of the material gathered....Individuals should constantly keep up to date with skills and knowledge, and learn to learn. Organisations will need employees who can take on new ideas and techniques and adapt to situations which match their (often dynamic) core activities. One approach to this matching of skills of the individual with needs of the organization is through the use of competency analysis.

(Weightman 1994, p.23-27)

Edwards, Hanson and Raggatt (1996, p.261) note that personal skills offer a common strand linking learning experiences through school, further and higher education. Individuals pursue different specialisations as they move between education, training, and work. In this area of transfer - the skills required for transfer - links can be made between stakeholders promoting work related skills, and those that promote learning skills.

As noted by Murdock and Scutt (2003), the Chartered Institute of Management developed the Personal Competency Model (Table 2) to develop effective management skills, widely used in United Kingdom. These skills are necessary for effective management across all competencies in varying circumstances (Murdock and Scutt 2003, p.xxix). The Personal Competency Model (PCM) is outlined below:

Table 2: Overview of the Personal Competency Model

Behavioural Indicator	Sub-indicators
Acting assertively	-
Acting strategically	-
Behaving ethically	-
Building teams	Managing and relating to others
Communicating	-
Focusing on results	Planning and prioritizing, striving for excellence
Influencing others	-
Managing self	Controlling emotions and stress Managing personal learning and development
Searching for information	-
Thinking and decision-making	Analysing, conceptualizing, taking decisions

Source: Murdock and Scutt 2003, p.xxix

Through this personal competency model, the Institute can promote skills relevant to work and learning.

Development of attitudes and values

Again, as outlined by the Education and Manpower Bureau, personal development is closely related to students' attitudes and ability to cope with the future change. These attitudes and values can be developed gradually through active participation in learning. The Bureau has proposed a set of values and attitudes in personal development, for inclusion in the school curriculum. They are as follows:

Core Values: sanctity of life, truth, aesthetics, honesty, human dignity, rationality, creativity, courage, liberty, affectivity, individuality.

Sustaining Values: self-esteem, self-reflection, self-discipline, self-cultivation, principled morality, self-determination, openness, independence, enterprise, integrity, simplicity, sensitivity, modesty and perseverance.

Attitudes: optimism, participation, criticism, creativity, appreciation, empathy, caring and concerned, positive, confidence, cooperation, responsibility, adaptability, open-mindedness, respectful, a desire to learn, diligence, commitment to core and sustaining values.

(Education and Manpower Bureau 2004b, p.15)

As suggested by Cotton (1995, p.91-94), attitudes are influenced by everything which happens to us, personal values, and the values and norms of society, as outlined below:

- Personal – these directions come from within the individual person. They are the result of working memory and thinking – ‘What I think is right’.
- Societal – these directions come from within society, the basis of a particular culture – *group norms*.

Cotton also suggests permanent changes of attitude are linked to:

- Compatibility with life style: Slimming may involve rescheduling meals or taking up enjoyable, gentle exercise.
- Linked to self-image and self-esteem: the desire to be thin and attractive and to fit into smaller, more stylish clothes may motivate slimming and dieting, which may then instill a permanent attitudinal change.

However, Cotton notes there can be resistance to attitudinal change:

- Extremeness – some people hold very extreme views and have to make much greater effort to achieve change.
- Multiplicity – attitudes are often enmeshed in a range of other attitudes. The attempt to change one attitude, may involve many other attitudes linked to it, like trying to pull a strand of pond-weed out of a garden pool.
- Consistency – sometimes there is an intellectual resistance to change. A particular attitude may be rationalised using particular logic and reasoning and there is a reluctance to rethink that logic.

Therefore, students' ability to develop the right attitudes can be blocked by the factors listed above. Educators have to consider the best way to assist students to build up their own good attitudes and values in life.

Personal development through individual exploration

According to Murdock and Scutt (2003), personal competency can be achieved: through self-development so as to explore personal strengths and weaknesses and learn how to overcome this. This will provide learners with the opportunity to agree with others on how to address their own self-development needs, through formal reviews, daily interaction and informal feedback, advice and guidance.

(Murdock and Scutt 2003, p.xxviii)

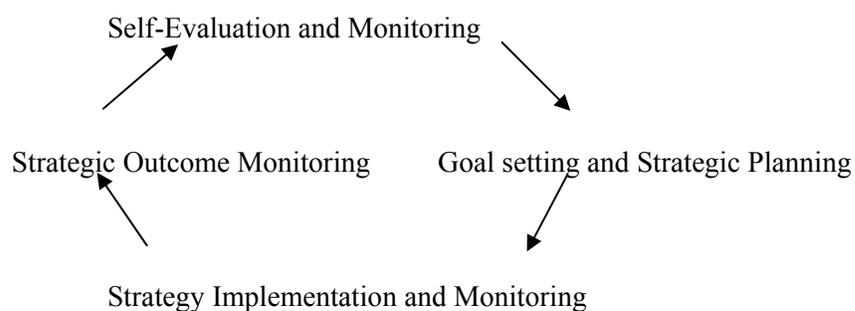
As cited in Cotton (1995, p.111), Carl Rogers notes that the teacher must facilitate the development of the individual's self-concept, and help individual student to achieve self-actualisation. In order to achieve this, both the teacher and the student must strive to be self-aware. When the self-image and the ideal self are closely related, then the person is well-adjusted, able to participate in effective in learning and is positive about life.

Johns (1996, p.84) discusses how learning to reflect is key in increasing self-awareness and personal development. Johns also suggests that the training method adopted in personal development through individual exploration should be a developmental and

evolving list called a ‘self-planned learning’ list, describing the major tasks completed and major personal changes achieved during learning process.

Zimmerman, Bonner and Kovach (1996, p.10) discuss how high achievers set a greater number of specific learning goals for themselves, use more strategies to learn, self-monitor their learning progress more effectively, and are more systematic in adapting their methods. Zimmerman et al. outline key approaches based on self-learning, self-monitoring and self-evaluation. These are fairly closely in line with the Personal Growth curriculum in secondary schools (as discussed in section 2.3). Therefore, self-learning plays a crucial role in learning and development and self-regulation achieves better learning outcomes. They outline a self-regulated learning cycle involving 4 steps, as follows:

Figure 2: A cyclical model of self-regulated learning



Source: Zimmerman et al. 1996, p.11

By establishing this four-step self-regulatory cycle, educators can help students organise and appreciate links between their study behaviours and learning outcomes. (Zimmerman et al. 1996, p.12). Cotton (1995, p.111-112) also highlights the importance of self-evaluation, and discusses additional teaching methods and strategies to help students improve self-image, as follows:

Improving self-image

- empathy with the students, i.e., sharing a fellow feeling
- congruence of students' ideas ambitions: share the same values and ambitions
- positive regard for the all students: think the best of their efforts, work and opinions

Developing a student-centred approach

- encourage students to participate in and contribute to learning
- incorporate students' views into learning plans and schemes of work
- value students' contributions
- use techniques which encourage full students participation
- encourage peer group assessment and self-assessment

To conclude, building self-awareness and self-image can enhance learning. Self-evaluation and monitoring can identify personal abilities and attainment and help formulate strategies to achieve success. Suitable feedback and review by assessors, educators, trainers or even peers can be implemented.

Personal Development and Curriculum Plan

In curriculum plan, it is important to fully include knowledge, skills, and good attitudes in learning. Regarding personal development curriculum design, the official website of the Office of Undergraduates, University of Texas at Dallas, notes: ‘student development reflects theories of human growth and environmental influences as applied to in-class and out-of-class personal learning opportunities.’ Therefore, what kind of in-class and out-of-class learning activities can be integrated into the curriculum to support the development of student skills to meet future challenges? According to Lo C.C. R., ‘to make pastoral care a proactive service for all students, it is crucial to have an agreed background curriculum. Personal and social education (PSE) can help schools to meet the needs of students, and provide students with a point of reference. PSE can help students become autonomous through school experience within the official and hidden curriculum’ (Lang and Marland, 1985 cited in Lo C.C.R.,2003 p.25).

Using Active Learning in Class

Silberman (1990, p.79) suggests that ‘a well-designed lecture can be an effective training method.’ Six lecturing methods are suggested:

- Demonstration
- Case Study
- Guided Teaching
- Group Inquiry
- Read and discuss
- Information search

(Silberman 1990, p.79)

Through these active learning methods, more effective lecture can be delivered.

Silberman also explores six major experiential learning approaches as follows:

- Role playing
- Games and simulation
- Observation
- Mental imagery
- Writing tasks
- Projects (Silberman 1990, p.95-96)

Active teaching and learning methodologies can be adopted in Hong Kong learning environment as suggested by Silberman so as to reinforce students' active learning experiences. The following suggested methodologies can be used in class with a maximum of 25 participants:

Suggested active teaching methodologies

- Scenario building
- Role-plays
- Learning through games
- Action learning
- Collaborative learning
- Issue-based learning
- Outcome-based learning

- Peer reviews
- Case studies of business/industry
- Group discussions
- Guest lectures
- Project learning
- Telephone interviews
- Multimedia presentations
- Internet research
- Group presentations

These methods can be applied in various modules such as Business Management. In the recruitment and selection unit, possible active learning activities include group discussion, the designing of job descriptions and the production of recruitment materials, role-plays and recruitment presentations. Through the use of different active learning activities, students can understand the practical recruitment process more deeply.

Using Active Learning out-of-class

As suggested in Lo C.C.R (2003) study, ‘Galloway (1990) recognised that students’ attitudes, behaviour and progress are influenced by many elements, among which is the hidden curriculum. Hidden curriculum includes all “incidental learning” and reflects the “social and emotional climate” of the school’ (Galloway 1991, p.15 cited in Lo 2003, p,26). The hidden curriculums includes all out-of-class activities such as charity work, voluntary work, the Student Attachment programme (SAP), the Supplemental Instruction

(SI) programme, and the Students Affairs Office (SAO) extracurricular activities. Active teaching methodologies can be integrated into the hidden curriculum to facilitate initiative learning, as follows:

Out-of-class suggested active teaching methodologies

- Formal training workshops
- Flexible learning
- Collaborative learning
- Action learning
- Field trips
- Company visits
- Student internships
- Community project learning
- Life-wide learning

Regarding ways to adopt active learning models in out-of-class training programme, this will be explored in details in section 6.3. Kember (2008, p.12) also suggests ‘curriculum design and planning needed to formulate aims which include the development of necessary generic and professional/disciplinary capabilities. The design of the curriculum then needed to ensure that adequate practise was provided in each capability’. Design of co-curricular activities as recommended by The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) will be explored in section 2.6, and practical issues are addressed in section 6.3 (A Practical Example).

In summary, different active teaching and learning methodologies can be used in the official and hidden curricula to develop students' cognitive and intellectual skills. It is important to understand the design of personal development curricula and the way to enrich students' fully-rounded physical, social, emotional, spiritual, as well as intellectual development.

2.4 Providing Personal Development Education at HKIVE

Introduction

HKIVE adopts an integrated approach to personal development in the formal college curriculum. In this study, this included the Creativity, Action and Services (CAS) module, the Integrated Studies (IS) module, cross-border visits, the Student Attachment Programme (SAP) and mentor supervision in final year projects. In short, personal development is delivered through two short modules, a final year project and extra-curricular activities. The detailed content analysis for each module and relevant activities is presented in Chapter 4.2 (Documents Analysis). As stated in the VTC mission, key skills for lifelong learning and employment are the key elements of vocational training.

Key skills in lifelong learning and employment

Thacker, Pring and Evans (1987, p.192-193) suggest that how individuals perceive the world is very much affected by their level of personal development. There are a number of skills and abilities which students should be encouraged to develop. A preliminary list might include:

- Communication
- Co-operation
- Affirmation
- Trust
- Conflict resolution (Thacker, Pring and Evans 1987, p. 192-193)

In addition, the Centre for Development and Evaluating Lifelong Learning, at the School of Education at the University of Nottingham defines the key skills as

A set of transferable skills, considered central to academic, vocational and personal development. Significant features of this definition are that key skills are an identified set of skills which are common to all learning activity, and underpin effective performance in a wide range of settings; should enable individuals to perform more effectively in new, unfamiliar settings or contexts; are essential to personal development, and therefore to the individual's capacity to manage his or her own learning now and in the future.

(Centre of Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning, 2001)

Obviously, these key skills are important for students to advance their learning. Do HKIVE courses develop these key skills? The Teaching and Learning Resources Centre outlines these skills as follows:

The key skills framework provides a clear statement describing the generic skills, attitudes and behaviours desired by employers and valued by the Vocational Training Council (VTC). VTC courses embracing these Key Skills help equip students with the necessary graduate outcomes to make a successful transition to the world of work.

(VTC 2006c, Teaching and Learning Centre)

According to Raggatt, Edward and Small (1996, p.106) generic skills comprise intellectual ('learning how to learn'), and psychological ('ready for change') skills, as well as skills associated with geographical mobility. Key skills are crucial in enabling students to be effective lifelong learners, to meet the new challenges of the 21st century. The key skills recommended by VTC are as organized into three areas as follows:

Fundamental Skills

- Communication
- Managing Information
- Numeracy
- Problem solving

Personal Management Skills

- Positive Attitudes and behaviours
- Responsibility
- Adaptability
- Continuous learning
- Work safely

Teamwork Skills

- Working with others
- Participation in projects and tasks

From the 2004/2005 academic year, all full-time first year students of two and three year Higher Diplomas and second year students of four year Higher Diplomas are required to complete 15 hours of work comprising six hours in class, six hours of practice and three hours of consolidation and presentation in the Key Skills module. This is a mandatory module that students have to complete before graduation. The aims of the Key Skills modules are as follows:

To help students become self-directed and lifelong learners by providing them with a framework and general approach to identify, acquire and apply Key Skills to meet the VTC's graduate outcomes.

(HKIVE/TY 2007b at <http://www.vtc.edu.hk/ive/ty/sau/keyskills>)

Assessment of the module is on a pass/fail basis and the results are recorded on academic transcripts. A 'pass' in the Key Skills module is mandatory.⁶ As well as key skills, life skills were also introduced in the formal curriculum from the 2005/2006 academic year.

The main content is centered on five core elements as follows:

- (1) Maintaining personal health
 - Understand the importance of maintaining a healthy balanced diet

⁶ Information extracted from Student Handbook 2005/2006, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (TY), Vocational Training Council

- Acquire the basic knowledge of physical fitness
- Develop a healthy lifestyle
- (2) Developing social skills
 - Acquire the skills of raising their emotional intelligence
 - Identify strategies for successful teamwork
 - Understand the importance of social manner and establish friendship/connection
- (3) Developing basic decision-making skills
 - Develop analytical and problem solving skills
 - Identify group problem solving methods
- (4) Managing personal finances
 - Identify practical skills in making spending and/or saving decisions
 - Acquire fundamental financial planning skills
 - Recognize the causes and consequences of financial management
 - Understand simple investment and protection plans
- (5) Develop basic employment skills
 - Understand the proper attitudes and ethical issues in the workplace
 - Recognize effective conflict management skills
 - Understand the occupational health and safety requirements in workplace

Furthermore, full-time first year students of four year Higher Diplomas are also required to participate in a minimum six sessions of the General Education Programme conducted by the Student Affairs Office. Successful attendance of six sessions or more is recorded as a non-academic achievement.

Three core areas of key and life skills were used by the researcher to design the student survey research questionnaires (Part 2 and Part 3 in Appendix A) to measure the success of personal development education at HKIVE.

2.5 Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management (HKIHRM) Continuous Learning Recognition (CLR) Scheme

An objective of this study is to investigate learning techniques that facilitate students' personal development. This study's remit includes consideration of the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management (HKIHRM) Continuous Learning Recognition (CLR) Scheme 2006. The CLR has the following objectives:

- to motivate members towards continuous learning;
- to recognize members' efforts in enhancing their professional knowledge; and
- to reassure employers that HKIHRM members are continuously updated.

(Hong Kong Institute of Human Resources Management, 2006)

The CLR scheme comprises three stages: the registration period (1 month), the learning period (1 year) and the confirmation period (3 months). The Institute hopes that through this scheme it can encourage members in their self-development, and keep the profession vibrant during the years ahead. HKIHRM uses Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as a tool to recognize members' professional development. CPD is a questionnaire to ascertain the learning outcomes of both self-learning and formal learning programmes.

HKIHRM also designs other training courses that enable members to update their professional knowledge. The researcher participated in one such course: the three-month HKIHRM Certificate in Employment Law and Employee Relations from June 2006 to October 2006. Guest speakers were invited to share their professional experience. Certificate of achievements were presented to all participants upon successful completion of the programme (those who achieved an 80% attendance rate with a pass in a mid-term test and the end-of-term open book exam).

The CLR scheme was used to design this study's survey research questionnaire (Part 4 in Appendix A).

2.6 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) is committed to being the leading, best practice professional institute in the UK and Ireland, according to its website. The institute adopted a continuous learning approach – Continuing Professional Development (CPD) - to help people manage learning and growth. In order to make this a success, professional standards are set and (to be a qualified chartered member), participants have to meet the criteria set out below:

- Leadership and Management
- People Management and Development
- Specialist and Generalist Personnel and Development
- Applied Personnel and Development

(CIPD at <http://www.cipd.co.uk/mandq/routes/educate/pac/starndards>)

Qualified members still have to keep up continuous learning and through the CPD process. The process is centered on personal objectives and enables people to progress towards achieving their goals. Using reflection and focusing on outcomes and results, members achieve their pre-set targets. Learners continuously ask themselves what they have learned, what they can do now that they couldn't do before (self-evaluation). Learners record their learning experience in the CPD record. As stated by the institute:

Learning is measured in terms of clearly defined learning outcomes and standards. All members keep a record detailing their up-to-date skills and knowledge, and that accountability can become a positive opportunity to identify and achieve career goals. By doing so, members boost their confidence, strengthen their professional credibility and become more creative in tackling new challenges

(CIPD at <http://www.cipd.co.hk/mandq/develop/cpd/aboutcpd/whatiscpd.htm>)

Two record forms need to be used: the Development Record and the Individual Development Plan, as follows:

A. Development record

Key Dates	What did you do?	What did you learn from this?	How have / will you use this? Any further action?
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B. Individual Development Plan (IDP)

What do I want/need to learn?	What will I do to achieve this?	What resources or support will I need?	What will my success criteria be?	Target dates for review and completion
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According to the CIPD, the IDP is part of an annual process, tied to the business planning and budget cycle, whereby management establishes training plans and goals for members of the organisation. When the approach is adopted in the educational sector, staff help students to identify personal goals aligned with the VTC mission and employment requirements, through the use of a plan similar to the IPD.

Apart from two forms already discussed, members are also required to provide evidence of their Continuing Professional Development by completing the following questions:

Part 1: Reflecting back

Q1 What do you consider were the three most important things that you learned last year? Please also briefly describe how they were learned?

Q2 Please summarise the value you've added to your organisation/clients/customers over the last 12 months through your professional development?

Q3 What have been the tangible outcomes of your professional development over the last 12 months and what aspects of your work have changed as a result?

Q4 Who else has gained from your professional development and how?

Part 2: Moving forward

Q1 How do you identify your learning and professional development needs?

Q2 What are the three main areas or topics you wish to develop in the next 12 months and how will you achieve these?

Q3 What are the key differences that you plan to make to your role/organisation/clients/customers in the next 12 months?

Q4 When will you next review your professional development needs?

2.7 Competency-based learning

Sumerall, Lopez and Oehlert (2000) define competency as involving:

information as well as skill in applying that knowledge (Stratford, 1994); and has been defined in terms of three separate domains: what the individual brings to the job, what the individual does in the job, and what is achieved (Proctor, 1991). Thus, knowledge, performance, and outcome are essential features.

(Sumerall, Lopez and Oehlert 2000, p.4)

Sumerall et al (2000, p.8) also note that ‘competency-based education and training may be used to justify a field’s existence, to ward off potential litigation, to keep in step with current trends, or to better define necessary skills graduates should be able to perform.’

Hall and Jones (1976, p.29) define competency-based learning as those performances that are based on the acquisition, integration, composite building, and application of a set of related skills and knowledge. These performances entail a growth process, a gestalt building, as well as the learning of individual skills.

According to the report on the 2006 Strategic Planning Retreat, VTC plans to use the Qualification Framework (QF) and its associated Specifications of Competency Standards (SCSs) (industry-sector specific competencies and generic competencies) as the primary reference for curriculum development so as to enhance the competitiveness of the VTC HD programmes (VTC 2006d, p.2). Sumerall, Lopez and Oehlert (2000, p.5) discuss how an expert is needed to set appropriate competencies. Competencies should be contained and practical, and based on the advice of established experts who can review competencies within the context of change. They design competency standards in accordance with functional areas, such as accounting competencies designed for the Higher Diploma course in Accounting. When setting these standards, the designer should identify special tasks in accordance with functional areas and design simulated activities to engender familiarity with particular professions. According to Arter (2001, p.83), the design should improve as well as judge students' performance, as follows:

1. The performance target should be clear and unaltered, providing an instructional target for the teacher and a learning target for the students.
2. There should be no "mystery" regarding performance expectations and the criteria by which students' work will be judged.
3. The work samples equip students to more accurately self-assess and improve their work.

According to Sumerall, Lopez and Oehlert (2000),

Training to competency at the knowledge level would include providing literature, training seminars as needed, and test/retest opportunities. Methods for training to competence at the skill level could include reviewing audio/video-tapes of the trainee with clients. Supervisors could provide ongoing assessment of tapes until competency is routinely achieved. (Sumerall, Lopez and Oehlert 2000, p.31)

Performance standards should be set and feedback relating to strengths and weaknesses provided so students know whether they have achieved the required competencies.

The particular training to competency is modeled around what competencies are needed to be enhanced. Different competency standards need to be applied in different profession settings. In the UK, national, qualification-driven competency-based systems are based on standards defined by industry (Fletcher 2000, p.3). This indicates that competency standards should be derived from industry itself and be designed as performance indicators relating to certain courses or activities. Sumerall, Lopez and Oehlert (2000, p.13) discusses competency-based education and training in professional psychology (Peterson et al., 1991) as having the following nine competency areas:

- Training in basic psychological knowledge
- Training in relationship building
- Training in assessment
- Training in intervention

- Training in research
- Training in consultation and education
- Training in supervision
- Training in advanced clinical skills
- Training in ethics and attitudes

(Sumerall, Lopez and Oehlert 2000, p.13-15)

All above training modules are tasks-oriented and are related to the duties required in the workplace. This supports ideas explored in Fletcher's (2000) qualification-drive competence-based systems. Teaching strategies discussed by Sumerall et al.(2000), including qualification-driven competency-based systems (comprising demonstration, evaluation, feedback sessions, lectures, role models and practice exercises), can also be adopted.

Once the scope of competencies is derived from industry, the next step is to assess whether or not competencies have been achieved by the end of the training course (Sumerall, Lopez and Oehlert 2000, p. 30). Harris et al. (1995, p.162) describe competency-based assessment as a process of risk management requiring valid quality assessment processes.

Assessment may be conducted by:

1. The individual themselves (if they do not know competent they are, then how competent are they?)

2. By individual's peers (this may include fellow students, workmates, and fellow practitioners);
3. By 'experts' (including teachers, lecturers, trainers, supervisors and a variety of other individuals)' (Harris et al. 1995, p.176, cited in Marsh 1999)

Any on-going assessment of students' performance indicates whether minimal competency standards have been achieved. Skills and competency assessment is a difficult task for educators due to the professional judgments involved. Weightman (1994) addresses the crucial starting point of adopting competency based learning:

One common starting point for using competencies is to ensure that the personnel of the organisation are competent in those areas which are important to the organisation. Competencies is a methodical system for looking at the behaviour of individuals that fits in with some of other systematic processes of management. It is conventional, and seems appropriate if we want to be systematic, to start with the overall organisation and then work through to the individual. (Weightman 1994, p. 28)

Experts play an important role in the successful implementation of competency-based learning in college. Assessment is discussed in detail in section 2.9.

2.8 The Active Learning Model

Active teaching helps students to learn actively. Guillaume, Yopp and Yopp (2007, p.3) define active teaching as follows:

Active teaching is an approach to instruction vigorously pursued by the teacher with the full intention to improve student learning and student control over that learning. Active teaching is characterized by clear purposes and is based on what the teacher knows about her particular students and about human learning and motivation. Active teachers modify instruction based on learners' reactions and mastery of new information and manage their classrooms to maximize student success.

Guillaume et al. (2007) argue teachers can motivate students through understanding them, setting clear goals and using appropriate teaching methods to help students to learn effectively. Stern and Huber offer further explanation:

Active learning is defined in one sense to mean that the learner uses opportunities to decide about aspects of the learning process. A second definition of active learning connects it to mental activity in another sense: it refers to the extent to which the learner is challenged to use his or her mental abilities while learning. Thus active learning on the one hand has to do with decisions about learning and on the other hand making active use of thinking. (Stern and Huber 1997, p.19)

Cotton (1995, p.42) reinforce Stern and Hubers' notion of active learning, outlining that active learning is a popular strategy in teaching and training. She also suggests that in learning support groups, individuals find assistance and encouragement as they work with others on the same learning tasks. Kember discusses higher-order teaching, including active learning thus:

One of the most important facets of the teaching and learning environment for promoting the development of capabilities was the provision of active learning experiences. Practise of the capabilities occurred when there was an activity which demanded their application. (Kember 2008, p.10)

Michael and Modell discuss the provision of resources and the key role of the educator to help develop new learning experiences:

The successful instructor must be psychic, anticipating every possible problem that students may have and preparing suitable learning experiences to address each of these problem....they must develop appropriate activities, along with supporting resource material, to meet all of these potential needs. Preparing for class must also include anticipating the unknown, an impossible task, and having solutions at hand for unknown problems... The questions that must be kept in mind are, “What problems do I anticipate my students will have when working with pertinent information?” and “What resources do I need to help the students recognize the problems they are having?” (Michael and Modell 2003, p.44-45)

Active learning methods discussed in this study encourage students to make decisions about their learning strategies, within the context of support groups and resources that support experiential learning. The active learning model can comprise action learning,

project-based learning, flexible learning, and collaborative learning. These methods enrich the learning experience, and can include participation in extra-curricular activities.

Action Learning

Hicks (2000, p.3) discusses how education and training providers recently have adopted experiential learning methods such as outdoor-experiential education, computer simulations, and action learning to the effectiveness of their curricula. Action learning can be categorized as a kind of experiential learning (Clements, Wagnes and Roland 1993; Hicks 2000). Gauthiers (2007) reaches similar conclusions about learning: we learn through action and we learn by participating. As noted by Hicks, this action learning method can be used in executive training or leadership programmes. HKIVE offers commerce-orientated subjects which are similar to executive or leadership programmes; the action learning model thus can be applicable in education in some scenarios. Pedler (1991) discusses action learning in an academic context:

In recent years pressures on educational institutions to deliver services efficiently have often meant reducing inputs. In such a context, proponents of Action Learning are inevitably involved in attempts to establish credibility and acceptance within the institution on professional, intellectual and administrative grounds.... It involved enabling staff to shift from a 'teacher-expert' role to one of 'learning facilitator', where students are permitted to make mistakes without it being seen as the 'fault' of the tutor. (Pedler 1991, p.166)

In action learning, the role of the teacher changes to that of a facilitator, and responsibility for learning is shifted to the student to learn in their own way. Action learning is not widely adopted in Hong Kong education system. However, action learning is a popular method in the United States, used by human resources professionals in problem solving, organisational learning, team building, leadership development and professional growth and development (Hicks 2000, p.4). It is a holistic approach to management development, problem solving and inquiry, and a tool for empowerment.

McGill and Beaty (2001, p.246) discuss how action learning improves learning effectiveness:

We believe the use of action learning, and with it, attention to the whole person, including the personal and emotional, can extend the learning and effectiveness of managers in organizations, and teachers and student learners in higher education.

Action learning 'strives to be proactive and empowering' and encourages people to take responsibility for the way they relate to the world (McGill 2001, p.248). Educators design tasks for students, who then take appropriate action, and hence learners take responsibility for the learning process. Through adopting action learning, students understand what they learn (particularly at the fundamental level of how they see the world). Students develop knowledge through this learning process and become a whole person through the completion of a task.

Pedler (1991, p.169) also notes:

Action Learning will not work without shaping the expectation of course participants and clients in advance of joining the programme. In order to achieve this, the teaching teams have responsibilities beyond class-contact hours allocated. The role, perhaps, needs to be more ambassadorial rather than evangelical.

Pedler also suggests that learning groups consisting of up to eight participants with an adviser and project tutor are the most conducive for learning. The primary functions of the group are to support and encourage each participant through the project task and associated learning, summarised as follows:

- Sharing experiences and problems, helping to rationalise them.
- Identification and diagnosis of organisational and personal needs.
- Exploring theories and approaches.
- Discussing programmes for action.
- Exploring processes of evaluation and experimentation.
- Developing and evaluating plans for implementation.
- Providing feedback regarding the competencies and progress of each participant.
- Providing feedback on each participant's interpersonal skills.

(Pedler 1991, p.173)

Educators have to identify students' expectations before organising a suitable programme and form a learning set to provide a good learning environment. Moreover, the role of the

educator involves sharing the experience and learning of students whilst being an adviser when necessary. The skills required in an educator involved in action learning include:

- Being a good listener
 - Having an unobtrusive manner
 - Having a willingness to give feedback
 - Having an understanding and recognition of roles
 - Making good judgment as to when to direct the set's attention away from the task and on to the process
 - Having willingness to be involved in the total process including selection, project meetings, induction and assessment.
- (Pedler 1991, p.176-177)

In conclusion, action learning enables students to learn through action, giving them responsibility, and also enhances personal development through action and continuous reflection.

Project-based Learning

Since 2000, project work is widely used in secondary school and post-secondary college. Project learning is a students-centered approach. Through the process, students take the initiative to conduct thematic research, including choosing the topic, devising a research plan, collecting data, implementing the research plan and drawing a conclusion (Education and Manpower Bureau 2002, p. 40). Typically, a group of four-five people executes a project. Cotton (1995, p.54) describes some of the characteristics of successful learning groups as follows:

Intrinsic task: Enjoying the subject, judging ideas, examining assumptions, listening attentively, tolerating ambiguity, learning about groups.

Extrinsic task: Follow-up to lecture or demonstration, understanding handouts, improving relationships and gauging progress.

Through learning groups, students develop trust and a good working relationship between each other and are accountable. In addition, Cotton summarises other outcomes of project work as follows:

- Development of communication skills and thinking.
- Development of personal confidence.
- Management of own learning.
- Development of the ability to work with others.
- Gaining insights into yourself and others. (Cotton 1995, p.54-55)

Evidence from the programme in Afterschool Education and Research and Project Zero at Harvard University also suggests that project-based learning is a good model:

Here, a group of after school students democratically conceptualizes goals, learns how to write and revise a plan, works together to make creative products and studies skills that enable them to perform the various tasks. Math is not just math anymore, but a way to get ready to sell....And these children reaped the benefits of reaching their

goals, experiencing support from staff, teachers, and parents as they learned about generosity and organized giving. (Pittman 2003, p.122)

Button (1974, p.1) notes that ‘group work is about helping people in their growth and development, in their social skills, in their personal resources, and in the kind of relationships they establish with other people.’ Thousand (1994, p.14) outlines how Student Team Learning (STL) approaches ‘were developed by Robert Slavin (1983a, 1983b, 1986, 1990) and his associates at John Hopkins University. Student Team Achievement Divisions (STAD), Teams Games Tournaments (TGT), and Jigsaw II are all examples of STL methods. A central feature of STL is the combination of individual accountability and either group rewards or group goals. This combination is noted by Slavin (1983b, 1990) as a central to increasing student achievement’ (Thousand 1994, p.14).

Students in groups are learning together and can maximise achievement through the group setting.

According to the Project Learning Manual (Education and Manpower Bureau 2002, p.27), project learning comprises three different stages: pre-project, main project and post-project:

Pre-project Stage

- Decide on the objective, theme and content of the project

- Consider the key components to be included in project learning such as diversified learning experiences
- Devise a timetable
- Draft a time frame
- Draft an assessment plan

Main project Stage

- Giving briefings to students
- Selection of topics
- Methods of selecting the topic
- Project management plan
- Conducting the project with students

Post-project Stage

- Exhibit students' work
- Provide feedback to students
- Write down reflections on project learning and areas that can be improved

To conclude, project-based learning is an appropriate learning strategy within personal development programmes, supporting the development of students' social skills, interpersonal skills, problem solving skills and creativity – all skills are essential to successful learning.

Flexible Learning

Thomas (1995, p.54) defines flexible learning as a kind of open learning which puts the individual student at the centre of things and is sensitive to student motivations, anxieties, preferences and language capacity. The literature also outlines how flexible learning involves giving students some degree of choice over learning, enabling them take responsibility for their learning, and providing appropriate support to individual learner's needs. It introduces the flexibility needed by students (from a student-centred perspective), and provides new dimensions for students (from a teacher-centred or institute-centred perspective) (Hudson, Maslin-Prothero and Oates 1997, p.2). In their study, they examined case studies centered on improving access, giving students control and choice over learning, encouraging personal responsibility for learning, and providing support appropriate to individual needs. The cases explored the following areas:

- a) Flexible learning resources on campus such as computer-assisted learning packages, e-mail and resource-based learning materials, that give students more choice about when, where and how they learn.
- b) Work-based learning (work experience) should be flexible and be relevant to individual student needs and aims. Develop processes that encourage reflection and experiential learning, and devise assessment methods such as portfolios and profiling to aid reflective learning and professional and personal development.
- c) Flexible approaches to skill learning that encourage the development of students' transferable skills and enhance lifelong learning.

d) Institutional strategies to support flexible learning that integrate ‘new’ teaching and learning methods, enabling students to adapt to reduce contact time.

(Hudson, Maslin-Prothero and Oates 1997, p.6-7)

The work of Hudson, Maslin-Prothero and Oates is an important reference for this study.

Flexible learning is also embraced by the VTC:

Flexible learning practices, with the use of media and computer technology, enhance the learning process by fitting it around students’ lifestyle and interest. Students are not restricted to specific class times, instead, they are provided with a set of well-written materials to help their self-study. Flexible learning gives students a flexibility to learn in their interest at their own pace and helps them to explore their self-learning potential. (HKIVE/TY 2006c, p.11)

This method is already applied in formal learning, and it worthwhile to adopt this method in informal learning to support the development of self-learning, reflection, as well as creativity and flexibility, which are all essential skills in a successful lifelong learner. An individual who is a successful lifelong learner will have the flexibility, adaptability and the ability to develop new skills - all key to success in the modern, dynamic labour market.

Collaborative Learning

Bruner (1996, p.84, cited in Brady 2006, p.3) states that ‘Learning should be participatory, proactive, communal, collaborative, and given over to the construction of meanings.’ As

Bruner argues, students learn through participation, active involvement, and group interaction. In Hong Kong, the Education and Manpower Bureau notes that collaborative learning is conducive to developing stable and productive relationships. Such an environment engenders friendships, and the peer group supports social and psychological development. (Education and Manpower Bureau 2002, p.28). Collaborative learning encourages active learning, the sharing of views, and cooperation. Students learn how to collaborate with peers to work out a solution for the task/project. Learning thus depends on collaboration and communication with other students, rather than exclusively through the authority of the teacher (Bruffee 1993, p.1). Peers groups are important in building up the self-identity and self-esteem of the individual. Thousand, Villa and Nevin (1994) suggest the use of groups of two to four people to discuss, listen, question, explain, share ideas and materials, and stimulate learning. Reidetal (1989) discussed how collaborative learning can be conceptualised as having five phases: engagement, exploration, transformation, presentation and reflection. The programme content and information is worked on and reshaped by students in groups, information is shared, and then the learning is reviewed (Thousand 1994, p.23).

Collaborative learning can be applied to co-curricular activities to spur learning in groups through active participation. This provides a learning environment involving interaction between teachers, peers and the learning community. The method enhances students' social and negotiation skills and reflection, and building up good self-image and self-esteem.

Obstacles to Active Learning

Active learning is widely used in western countries, but there is no solid evidence indicating that active learning is widely used in co-curricular activities, although some basic information is provided by the Education Manpower Bureau and the VTC. Stern and Huber (1997) describe how active learning can be used widely provided the following issues are understood:

- Some students are more comfortable in more passive role.
- Active learning projects take time to execute.
- Educators need to keep track students' learning progress. This takes time and effort.
- Educators may prefer the traditional 'talk and chalk' method.
- Teacher training is needed.
- Full support from the VTC and departmental unit is required.
- The teacher-student ratio in Hong Kong is 1 to 30 in a classrooms and even greater in co-curricular activities. Group sizes need to be reduced to a maximum twenty to facilitate the active learning model. (Adapted from Stern and Huber 1997, p.17-18)

Stern and Huber note six considerations pertaining to active learning: learning attitudes, time factors, progress, staff professionalism, senior support, and class size. The active learning discussed in this study is based on the literature review and the idea that all these methods can be adopted if Stern and Huber's six considerations are addressed.

2.9 Assessment

Students tend to be assessment driven (Biggs, 1999 cited in Kember 2008, p.11). Therefore, assessment of students is a crucial part of educators' work. Marsh (1999, p.128-129) notes that in higher education assessment is driven by institutional (not only educational) demands to serve formative, summative and normative purposes:

Table 3: Assessment process

Assessment Type	Purpose	Implementation	Means
Formative	Developmental	Tutorial, trial submissions, self/guided assessments	Expert opinions
Summative	Assessing competency; Assessment excellence; Administrative	Formal submissions, Final presentations	Evidence; Professional judgement; Marks
Normative	Discriminatory	Final presentations Reviews of final marks	Professional judgement

Source: Chen, Ilett and Kinsland, 1998, cited in Marsh 1999, p.127

Assessment 'is a comprehensive, multifaceted analysis of performance and must be judgement-based and personal.' (Barell 2007, p.152). Inskipp discusses assessment thus:

The ongoing feedback and evaluation given to trainees during the course to clarify their skill strengths and weaknesses, to help them assess their learning needs and identify skills and competencies which they need to work on to reach the required standard. (Inskipp 1996, p.68)

Pring describes the linkage of assessment and personal development:

Any kind of development that is important enough to promote is important enough to be assessed in some broad sense of that term. If one knows what personal development means, then one must have some rough idea of what counts as having achieved it in some respect. One must be able to state what counts as appropriate evidence of success. It is therefore important to attend to the ways in which both the school and the individual are succeeding – the school in helping the individual to develop as a person, the individual in his or her own personal development. If it is argued that personal development is too much a subjective or a private affair for any form of assessment, then one should retort that it is much subjective... But that is not to say that personal development should be assessed through tests or examination. It does mean that one has to make judgements, and that to make judgements one needs to think by what criteria and on what evidence one is to make them.

(Pring 1985, p.139-140 cited in Best 1996, p.249)

Best explains that:

If the purpose of personal and social development education (PSE) and pastoral care is to promote student development, learning or change, it seems reasonable to expect that provision should be judged according to whether it achieves this aim. The implication for evaluation is that judgement of effectiveness is based on the analysis of student outcome data. (Best 1996, p.251)

As described in section 2.7, competency based education is addressed in VTC 8-Year strategic plan. Hall and Jones (1976, p.71) suggest that in competency-based education, programme administrators are typically less concerned about comparing students with each other than they are about comparing student abilities against preset criteria. Typically then, a formative, criteria based system is devised. The researcher of this study believes that performance criteria can be used in assessment. Who is the designer of the competencies-objectives? Hall and Jones (1976, p.347-348) suggest that these objectives:

- Are identified by someone (instructor, student, professional), or negotiated.
- Follow directly from assumptions: values, beliefs, ethics, opinions, and concerns of program builders.
- Are made public to students before they start working on them.
- Are constantly reviewed if necessary, in the light of the changing values and beliefs of program builders and the successes of students who have completed prior programs.

The assessment can then be shared with students to aid their understanding of their performance. Below is an example of assessment criteria for an oral presentation (Entrepreneurship Skills and Practice module):

- Plan, agenda & structure (10%)
 - Presence of a structure with a beginning, middle and end
 - Logical sequence of information
 - Evidence of preparation and rehearsal
- Content (25%)
 - Quality of script and depth of coverage of the topic: Company background, mission, marketing strategy, operation workflow and financial forecasts
- Effectiveness of visual aid (15%)
 - Ability to help explain and reinforce screen text and presentation
- Time limit (5%)
 - Present the report within 25 minutes
- Answering skills (15%)
 - Answer the assessor's questions correctly in a Q and A session
- Presentation skills (10%)
 - Demonstrate professional presentation skills
- Audience contact (10%)
 - Use appropriate eye contact to catch attention of the audience

A marking scheme involving grading is designed for the module. Students can perform the preset objectives. However, when assessing co-curricular activities which are not formally designed as such, what assessment tools should be used? As discussed in section 2.3.4 regarding personal development, individual exploration, and a self-regulated learning cycle plays an important role in developing students' self-awareness and development. Barell (2007, p.159) outlines several self-assessment methods (explanations provided by the researcher):

- Concept Maps – form a chart to identify all possible areas
- Thinking/Inquiry journal – write down completed tasks and problems encountered
- Folders/portfolio – list skills that need to be enhanced
- Weekly “wraparounds” – summaries of learning
- Letters home – letters to parents about to demonstrate understanding

Portfolios are a common tool to use in such programmes. Crockett (1998, p.4) defines a portfolio as ‘evidence, usually bound in some form of container, that suggests or demonstrates a person’s skills and abilities. Evidence may be referred to as samples, examples, documents, records, or products. Because they have been assembled together, they provide evidence of a person’s skills and abilities.’ Holloway and Carroll (1999) note the portfolio is an instructional technique frequently used in educational settings. It has proved very useful in helping students integrate the knowledge that they have learned in applied settings that demand complex thinking and action. They outline the following components in a portfolio:

1. Theoretical basis: goals, method of assessment, and relevant reading.
2. Supervision: session videotaped, followed by reflection on the work.
3. Self-assessment report by students. Feedback session to provide reflection on personal strengths and weaknesses.
4. Competency enhancement by peers, recorded as third party evidence demonstrating personal development.
5. External evaluation by tutor or employers.

(Holloway and Carroll 1999, p.220)

Creating a useful portfolio involves recording, reflecting, and collaborative skills. As students document their achievements, their performance will outstrip other students who don't. Crackett notes that:

If students learn to transform their portfolio contents into an effective presentation of their abilities, they will be learning to add value to information by organizing and prioritizing it. If they learn to use their portfolios as interviewing tools, they will be better prepared to find and get the jobs they want. (Crackett 1998, p.6)

In summary, the portfolio has three aspects: it is a documentary record of the students' professional work and growth; an assessment of the quality of the students' work; and a tool for interviews.

Best et al. (1996) discuss assessment and performance criteria used to gauge students performance based outcomes and evidence collected. Assessment should be linked to learning outcomes and empirical evidence, preset performance standards, ongoing assessment and evaluation. Assessment criteria need to be clear, transparent and straightforward, and express clearly the required performance per task. Apart from formal assessment, 'self and peer assessment is also recommended so as to help learners to take their own responsibility for their learning.' (Black and William 1998, p.26, cited in Barnes 1999, p.147). Inskipp (1996, p.78) also explains how a reliable assessment is one that should be repeatable, producing the same results using different assessors. If the overall assessment comprises assessment by peers and trainers, and self-assessment, all working to the same clear criteria within a climate of openness and responsibility, it is likely to be more reliable. Students are likely to become more self-aware through feedback from educators and peers and develop a clearer direction and set of goals.

In summary, the portfolio is one of the best methods to track learning progress and assess student submissions. Staff in charge of these assessments must have appropriate professional training and knowledge to devise performance criteria and methods of assessment. Students should raise questions and develop their ability to self-evaluate and reflect. Through portfolio work, students enhance these skills learners and manage personal information, thereby developing important lifelong skills.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of four main sections. Section 3.2 discusses the research assumptions of this study. Section 3.3 discusses sampling criteria, data linkage and analysis in detail. Research procedures are described in section 3.4. Lastly, section 3.5 outlines the ethical dimensions.

3.2 Research Assumptions

In this study, certain research assumptions underpin the research methods chosen for this study. This study involves certain ontological and epistemological assumptions regarding the ‘truth’ of students’ personal development at HKIVE.

Ontological Assumptions

A complex web of traditions underpins the conception of what exists, the nature of the world, perceived reality my research into the effectiveness of personal development opportunities of students at HKIVE uncovers the complexities of personal development education. When students attend college, they develop gradually through learning in class. As discussed in the literature review, students may also grow outside college through life experience and social groups. This gives a clear indication that students can learn inside and outside college, and personal development can develop independently from learning in college. Raggartt, Edward and Small (2000, p.176) argue that ‘there is a second side to the emphasis on ‘completeness’: the pursuit of all-round development. This striving can

be seen as counterpoint to another dominant educational trend, i.e. the concentration of attention on the cognitive development only of human beings. Other aspects of personality – including the aesthetic, social, moral, emotional, physical and even technical/manual – are regarded by western culture as more or less peripheral to education.’

Therefore the research assumptions are as follows:

- Personal development is constructed through formal and informal learning throughout life
- Generic skills can be developed during and after certain tasks
- Generic skills and abilities such as creativity and good knowledge can enhance self-confidence, a 'rounded' character, and personal development.
- Personal development can help to develop the individual aesthetically, socially, morally, emotionally and physically.

The quantitative research approach in this study identifies and explores students’ actual needs and satisfaction in HKIVE (Tsing Yi) around various aspects: college life, teaching and learning, participation in extracurricular activities and skill development.

Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemological assumptions include the means by which knowledge of the world is accrued, as well as the nature and limits of knowledge itself. Basic epistemological assumptions include:

- The world is ‘objective’ and exists independently of the person
- A clear distinction between ‘subjective’ person and the ‘objective’ world
- Knowledge is tested using observations and measurement
- The social world is like the natural world, including cause and effect patterns

In practice, how can students’ continuity of personal development throughout college life be measured and confirmed? If I assume student X is a good student, does this mean that they must be an effective learner with good competency levels in many aspects of their work? If so, I can conclude that students develop gradually through learning. By applying this assumption in the study, I may believe student X enjoys college life and is developing transferable skills in the college learning environment. If the belief is true, this may become knowledge. How do I know? I can undertake a study, including qualitative research to discuss all these issues in greater detail to get a true picture of the learning world of students.

Some social science literature argues that the philosophical assumptions underlying research practices centered on qualitative or quantitative approaches. It is essential for the researcher to understand the key features of the major methodologies paradigms. So, what constitutes acceptable areas of focus and research methodologies and how the subsequent findings related to these? The researcher has discussed the positivist approach which uses survey research to ascertain knowledge. However, an alternative view of social reality, which stresses the importance of the subjective experience of individuals in

the creation of the social world, focuses on different issues and uses different approaches. The approach now takes on qualitative and quantitative aspects (Cohen, Mansion and Morrison 2000). This underpins my study because the qualitative research was used (in-depth interviews with educators and human resource practitioners) to explore more deeply possible new approaches to personal development.

In short, the researcher adopts social science assumptions in the study. An evaluative research approach was used in the documents review, and a quantitative research methodology was applied when conducting student surveys. A qualitative approach was used in the educator and human resource practitioner interviews.

3.3 Data Collection and Procedure

Introduction

The data was collected from multiple sources, including documents, questionnaires and interviews: a range of rich sources from different perspectives to explore the truth of students' personal development opportunities in his/her College life at HKIVE (Tsing Yi). The variety of the methods allows cross-checking and corroboration by comparing data produced from different methods (Denscombe 1998, p.85).

Data collection comprised four phases. Phase one involved documentary research of relevant course content. Phase two involved quantitative research to assess students so as to identify students' competencies required in college. Phase three and four comprised

qualitative study through interviews with educators and human resource practitioners to enhance the validity of data collected from survey research and explore further ideas.

With the exception of interviews with human resources professionals, data were collected from staffs and students at the HKIVE (Tsing Yi), where the researcher is a full-time member of staff. The necessary level of access would not have been easily obtained elsewhere. The four phases are summarised below:

Phase One: document investigation (June 2004 - March 2005).

Phase Two: quantitative research with students (December 2005 - February 2006).

Phase Three: qualitative research with educators and senior management (May - July 2006).

Phase Four: qualitative research with human resources personnel (June to August 2006).

Documents

Analysis of course document identified key areas in personal development education. Course curricula from the period of 1st June 2004 to 31st March 2005 were examined, providing the background to personal development training at HKIVE. The documents that were analysed by the researcher through inspection are listed below:

1. The Higher Diploma course documents
2. Syllabus of Creativity, Action and Services (CAS)
3. Syllabus of Integrated Studies (IS)
4. Syllabus of Key Skills

5. Report of cross-border visit
6. Evaluation report of Student Attachment Programme (SAP)
7. Towards Quality Assurance, 5th Edition. HKIVE (Tsing Yi)
8. Student Interview Report
9. Staff Retreat Report, Department of Business Services and Management, Tsing Yi
10. Student Project Guide, BSM/IVE/Tsing Yi
11. Student Handbook, IVE/Tsing Yi

Questionnaires

Structured questionnaires containing predetermined questions were delivered to students directly. A questionnaire can measure students' learning, attitudes and opinions. Additionally questionnaires are low risk and can access to wide spectrum of people. A classic tool for use in questionnaires is the Likert scale, which allows respondents to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with carefully constructed attitudinal statements (Zikmund 1984, p.357). For this study, Likert-scale questionnaires with six-point scales were designed (Part 1, Part 2 and Part 4 in Appendix A). A rating of six scores indicated strong satisfaction, whilst one indicated strong dissatisfaction. Respondents who ranked their responses at 4,5 or 6 were generally satisfied with college life, whereas those choosing 1,2,and 3 were dissatisfied.

The questionnaires were comprised of four parts, as follows:

Part 1: A Likert-scale questionnaire with six-point from 1 – 6.

Part 2: Students' perception of competencies, key and life skills acquired at HKIVE.

Part 3: Competency profile of students with six-point scales from 1 (very low) to 6 (very high) designed to enable students to undertake self-assessment of competencies acquired at HKIVE and their expectations.

Part 4: Survey of students' developmental training comprising six-point scales from 1 (least likely) to 6 (most likely).

An additional option of 'no opinion' was provided where possible. Moreover, a close-ended question such as 'Yes' or 'No' was also used, for quick responses and easily tabulation. Also, an open-ended question was designed to invite students or respondents to provide fuller, personal comments.

Samples

In the quantitative research phase, the participants were full-time students at HKIVE (Tsing Yi). 146 questionnaires were distributed to seven representative groups: Human Resources and Management (HRM) at level 1; Business Information Systems (BIS group 1) at level 2; Business Information Systems (BIS group 2) at level 2; Corporate Administration and Systems (CAS) at level 3; Final Year Project Group at Level 4 (Project Group); Academic Group from the Supplemental Instruction Programme (Academic Group) at Level 3; Leadership Group from the Departmental Open Day Decoration Team 2005 (Leadership Group). 134 completed questionnaires were received and the response rates are shown below:

Table 4: Survey research response rate

Group	HRM	BIS (Group 1)	BIS (Group2)	CAS	Project Group	Academic Group	Leadership Group	Total
No. copies distributed	24	24	22	24	26	6	20	146
No. copies received	24	24	21	22	20	6	17	134
Response Rate	100%	100%	95%	92%	77%	100%	85%	92%

The overall response rate of 92% represents 17% of the total population of 899 students in HKIVE Tsing Yi during academic year 2005/2006.

Odiorne and Rummler (1998, p.155) note that one of the potential disadvantages of survey research is that results can be imprecise unless additional data is gathered in interviews. Accordingly, personal interviews were conducted with experts to further explore ideas.

Interviews

In the qualitative research phase, educators and human resource practitioners were interviewed using a semi-structured format. ‘Semi-structured interview aim to be “the best of both worlds”. They establish the core issues to be covered, but the structure of the interview and the topics covered can vary, around that core’ (Freebody 2003, p.133). Personal interviews allow flexibility and also interviewees’ nonverbal behaviours can be assessed. Findings from the survey research can be examined in personal interviews.

Eight interviews with educators and six interviews with employers were conducted. The interviewees chose the location, time and date of the interviews.

In order to let educators have more freedom to express themselves, semi-structured interviews were used. The research questions were derived from the review of document and the survey findings. The following ten sub-questions were used to guide this process:

1. Does Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (HKIVE) have a system to promote personal development? If yes, what is the system?
2. Does the Higher Diploma course at HKIVE incorporate co-curricular activities such as peer mentorship programmes and overseas visit in the formal syllabus? If not, should there be an integrated programme to promote students' personal development at HKIVE?
3. Is any formal assessment incorporated in co-curricular activities?
4. Is a whole person development approach proposed in the VTC Strategic Plan to catering for students' personal needs? Who is responsible for this?
5. Do you think that new VTC course curriculum structures (in the light of 3+3+4 education reform) incorporate the whole-school approach promoting personal development at HKIVE?
6. What types of co-curricular activities can be incorporated into the curriculum?
7. From your profession standpoint, could you give some suggestions on the kind of support which could be provided to facilitate students' personal development?

8. Do you think that HKIVE courses already incorporate all the relevant competencies in the formal curriculum?
9. Can you suggest way to help HKIVE students develop the required competencies?
10. What do you think of the response by students to the new Personal Development Programme (PDP)? Can the knowledge and experience gained through the PDP be recognised by the VTC and the employer, and form part of the formal departmental curriculum?

Six human resource practitioners were invited to explore the issue of personal development education. Six further sub-questions were designed to guide this inquiry:

1. What kind of people does your company prefer to recruit?
2. Which competencies are the most important to your company? Please list the top.
3. What sort of training is the most useful in developing the top 5 competencies you mention in question 2?
4. Can you suggest ways to help HKIVE students to develop the required competencies?
5. Based on the feedback from students, is it feasible to incorporate co-curricular activities in a Personal Development Programme in the future?
6. Can learning and knowledge gained though the PDP be recognised by employers? If not, how can the programme be improved?

Finally, an open-ended question let the interviewees to express themselves more fully, to augment the findings of this study.

Selecting Educators

Ten colleagues were selected, although only eight participants were eventually involved in the study. They included a Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Head of Department, Project Officers and a Student Counselor (who worked in personal education at HKIVE) and also a training consultant. Interviews took place from May 24, 2006 - July 20, 2006. Participant profiles are shown below:

Table 5: Interviewee profiles (educators)

Informant – Educators' perspective	Job Title (Years of experiences in education)
Informant a1 (Ia1)	Lecturer in Language Centre (13 years)
Informant a2 (Ia2)	Senior Lecturer in Business Administration Discipline (13 years)
Informant a3 (Ia3)	Senior Project Officer in Strategic Planning Office (13 years)
Informant a4 (Ia4)	Senior Project Officer (New Curriculum) at Pokfulam Skills Centre (10 years)
Informant a5 (Ia5)	Principal Lecturer at ICT/IVE/TY (8 years)
Informant a6 (Ia6)	Acting Head of Department at REF/M/IVE/MH (9 years)
Informant a7 (Ia7)	Student Counsellor of Student Affairs Office/IVE/TY (6 years)
Informant a8 (Ia8)	Training Consultant at Institute of Professional Education & Knowledge (PEAK) (over 10 years)

The Vice-principal and the Head of the Student Affairs Office were invited to participate in the study but both were unavailable during the fieldwork period. This did not affect the

research findings because other participants were able to represent the views of the Student Affairs Office and the VTC.

Selecting Human Resource Practitioners

A convenience sampling approach was used here. During the research period (June to August 2006) the researcher was taking a Certificate in Employment Law and Employee Relations at the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resources Management. Course coordinators, lecturers and course mates were invited to participate in this study. All those with more than three years working experience in the field of human resources were invited to participate in this study. Due to busy schedules, only six human resource practitioners ranging from officer grade to senior management grade were able to participate in the study, representing the views of employers. These participants are profiled below:

Table 6: Interviewee profiles (human resource practitioners)

Informant – HRM perspective	Job Title (years of experiences in human resource management)
1) Informant Iep1	Human resource management expertise (8 years)
2) Informant Iep2	Human Resources Officer (3 years)
3) Informant Iep3	Manager – Accreditation (over 8 years)
4) Informant Iep 4	Officer – Human Capital Management (over 10 years)
5) Informant Iep 5	Manager, Personnel Strategy and Relations (over 18 years)
6) Informant Iep 6	Senior Manager – Human Resources (over 20 years)

Data analysis

Course documents were reviewed to identify those in personal development. Generic skills and contact hours assessed to gauge the effectiveness of personal development education.

Descriptive analytical techniques including mean, frequency, percentile ranking and standard deviation were applied. The mean scores of each question were calculated. The mean is a measure of central tendency of the values in a set of data. There are several versions of the mean, but the most commonly used - 'arithmetic' mean - is calculated by adding the values in a dataset and dividing the result by the number of values (Blaikie 2003, p.71). It is a useful statistic to compare satisfaction scores for each factor. Higher scores imply higher satisfaction and lower ones imply dissatisfaction. Similar techniques were applied to Part 2 and 3. Blaikie (2003, p.52) notes that frequency counts and distributions can summarise large set of data. To establish frequencies of occurrence, data must be in categories and seven representative groups were designed in this study. Also, there are various rules for rounding. Blaikie also states that:

In order to undertake certain types of data analysis, such as discussing the characteristics of a frequencies distribution, or comparing data across categories, we need to reduce frequencies, the raw data, to some common base. This is done in two related ways: by calculating proportion using the equation of $(p) = \frac{f}{n}$ and using percentages with the formula of $(\%) = \frac{f}{n} \times 100$ to express another way of expressing proportion. (Blaikie 2003, p.59)

Frequency and ranking were applied to identify the top 10 competencies ranked by students. In Part 4, students selected their preferred form of personal education. Standard deviation was used to measure the dispersed of mean scores at different course levels.

In qualitative research, personal interviews gauged professional opinion and spurred discussion of new ideas. Interviews were transcribed, and summary reports indexed all participants' comments. Summary transcripts were reviewed three times in order to identify common themes and common words. Finally, the common points were categorised and related to the main theme of this study so as to explore the development of personal development at HKIVE (Tsing Yi).

Survey Research

Before the survey was implemented, the questionnaire was rigorously tested for flaws by recent (year 2005) graduates of the Higher Diploma in Business Information Systems at HKIVE (Tsing Yi). This exercise also determined how long the survey would take and tested the clarity of the questions. Structured questionnaires containing predetermined questions were then finalised and delivered directly to students. An invitation letter was also designed (see Appendix B).

Students completed paper-based questionnaires in their classrooms in Tsing Yi campus, except the Leadership and Project groups, who completed their questionnaires in rest areas under supervision. Participants were briefed before completing the survey and thus respondent error was minimised. This method was an efficient way of collecting data.

Personal Interviews

Before interviews were conducted, qualitative questionnaires including educators' and employers' interview questions were pre-tested by a Lecturer in the Language Centre at HKIVE (Tsing Yi) to seek comments on the design and quality of the questions, and also the time needed to complete the interview. It was suggested questions be tailor-made for each interviewee and their particular field of expertise. Thus, interviews varied. Sample interview questions for educators and human resources practitioners are illustrated in section 3.3.4. The interview invitation letter (Appendix C), the interview reply form (Appendix D) and the consent form (Appendix E) were sent to each participant via e-mail and followed up by post. The location and time of interviews was chosen by participants. As the interview was semi-structured, ad-hoc discussion was pursued if necessary. The interview was transcribed and sent to the interviewee for counterchecking before use in the study.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Introduction

The current study meets all of the ethical requirements of academic research. This section discusses ethics approval, consent and care of the subject, record keeping and research methods.

Ethics Approval

Research ethics approval was granted by School of Education, University of Nottingham, according to the guidelines set down by the British Education Research Association.

Consent

Participants in the study were given an invitation letter (Appendix B and C), an interview reply form (Appendix D) and a consent form (Appendix E) so that participants fully understand the aims of the study and give consent. All participants were briefed by the researcher on the aims of the survey and interview, and asked to participate in this study on voluntary. The respondents also understood that all data collected for research purposes would be published in form of a thesis but without any of their personal information being divulged.

Care

All information collected was kept confidential. Interview records were kept securely and will be destroyed after examination of this thesis.

Records

Interview transcripts were sent to interviewees for counterchecking and approval prior to their use in the study. All data was saved on computer.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the four phases of data collection: document review, quantitative research with students, and qualitative research with educators and human resource practitioners to address the research questions (section 1.2). The sub-research questions will also be addressed in this chapter.

The perceptions of students, educators and human resource practitioners on the issue of personal development, competency, teaching and learning strategies are discussed. The following findings are presented: Document analysis, survey research findings, and qualitative research findings from educators and human resource practitioners.

4.2 Document Analysis

The findings in this section will be presented separately for the most important documents including the module of Creativity, Action and Service (CAS), Integrated Studies (IS) and Final Year Project (FYP) and student internship namely Student Attachment Programme (SAP).

Creativity, Action and Services (CAS)

All full-time first year students are required to commit 60 hours to the module of Creativity, Action and Services (CAS), a personal development module with the following aims:

- develop creativity and acquire apply skills within business and commerce
- achieve self-reliance in learning by developing the abilities of self-study, independent learning and good organisational skills, to achieve a specified target
- appreciate that the successful completion of a task involves a multitude of competencies in behavioral and key skills, and also an academic understanding of the subject area associated with the task
- develop the interpersonal skills and abilities required in teamwork, to achieve a specified target through practical investigative and/or development work

The course encourages students to pursue their own interests, be responsible for lifelong learning, and gain independence.

The integrated experiential learning enhances students' exposure to the community. Students form groups of five to start a community project. To ascertain the effectiveness of this module, evaluation was conducted in June 2004 with 16 completed evaluation forms received from students. Findings indicate that knowledge and skills acquired, such as communication skills and problem solving skills, form a vital part of learning and can be applied to daily life. Students learn how to cooperate with others through developing the

community project. The most important finding was that students were aware of helping other people. Students also learn from project supervisors or community social workers. Some further comments extracted from open responses questions as follows:

Student 1: “CAS has given me a chance to do something that I haven’t tried before”

Student 2: “C”, “A”, “S” are important and useful for us, but it is difficult to finish at least 50 hours in 3 months. We haven’t got enough time to complete it.”

Student 3: “So far, it is good enough.”

Final Year Project (FYP)

The project-based learning approach adopted here is applicable to all final year students. Students complete a group project in an area of special interest relevant to their studies. Students are required to commit 60 hours to the project which last for one academic year, making use of knowledge already learned. Students choose either a research project or virtual enterprise project. Various guidelines, methods and tasks are used to assess students’ performance, including individual reports, oral presentations and business plans. Students are fully aware of performance indicators, so understand the requirements to be met. The marking scheme and criteria used for presentations is below:

Table 7: Assessment criteria for presentation

<p>A. Plan, Agenda & Structure (10)</p> <p>Prompt: structure with a beginning, middle and end; logical sequence of information; evidence of preparation and rehearsal.</p>
<p>B. Content (30)</p> <p>Prompt: quality of script, depth of coverage; accuracy, completeness, conciseness, spelling and grammar.</p>
<p>C. Audience Contact (10)</p> <p>Prompt: ability to generate interest in an audience about the topic and hold attention throughout; ability to establish and maintain eye contact with the audience without referring to notes.</p>
<p>D. Effectiveness of Visual Aid (10)</p> <p>Prompt: ability to help explain and reinforce screen text and presentation; use of a variety of quality visual aids.</p>
<p>E. Speed, Pitch, Vocabulary, Volume.....(10)</p> <p>Prompt: ability to speak clearly, audibly, and at the right speed.</p>
<p>F. Q & A Session (25)</p> <p>Prompt: ability to answer questions accurately.</p>
<p>G. Time Limit (5)</p> <p>Prompt: Presentation is completed on time.</p>

Source: HKIVE, Student Project Guide 2007

This project work enhances social and interactive skills gradually, such skills constitute hidden learning outcomes.

Integrated Studies (IS)

All full-time first year students are required to commit 60 hours in taking the module of Integrated Studies (IS) which enables students to develop and strengthen their core business competencies and personal qualities. The course objectives are as follows:

- develop creativity and apply skills within business and commerce
- achieve self-reliance by developing self-study, independent learning and good organisational skills focused on the achievement of a specified target
- appreciate that the achievement of a task involves a multitude of competencies, behaviours and key skills, in addition to an academic understanding of the subject area
- develop the interpersonal skills and abilities required for teamwork to achieve a specified target through practical investigative and/or development work

Skills such as personal skills, self-reliance and interpersonal skills are acquired. Group project work is integrated in this subject to enable students to familiarise themselves with virtual business operations and electronic-banking with support from the Hong Kong Network of Virtual Enterprises. Academic knowledge and IT skills are enhanced gradually. Occasionally, professional speakers are invited to deliver talks on stress management, environmental issues and civil education and these visits broaden students' knowledge and outlook.

In 2005 academic year, a sample group of 40 students provided feedback and 36 evaluation forms were received as follows:

Table 8: Integrated Studies research findings

Questions	IVE Rating out of 7 point scales (N=36)
1. The study materials (handouts, study guides, textbooks, on-line resources, reading list) were helpful.	4.83
2. The homework, projects, assignments and tests were relevant and helped me to learn.	4.81
3. The lessons were well prepared.	4.9
4. Explanations at the lessons were clear and helpful to my learning.	4.77
5. The class was managed effectively and the learning atmosphere was good.	4.71
6. I was encouraged to ask questions and take part in discussions and other activities in the class.	4.77
7. I was provided with helpful feedback on my work (e.g. on my assignments, homework, practical work, and general progress).	4.63
8. I was cared for and given help with my work as needed.	4.81
9. Overall, I learnt a lot from this module.	4.79
10. Overall, I would rate the teaching as good.	4.79

Source: HKIVE (2006b), Student Feedback Questionnaire Survey (SFQ)

All of the above scores are in the top third of possible responses, indicating general satisfaction across all these dimensions.

Student Attachment Programme (SAP)

In conjunction with industry, training opportunities are provided for students and 200 hours are allotted for the Student Attachment Programme (SAP) which are voluntary. The SAP is

designed for second year students to gain practical experience in career development, and is known by its new name of the Workplace Attachment Scheme since the 2007 academic year. By establishing and maintaining close relationships with industry, the department aims to enhance student exposure to the business community and encourage the application of knowledge and skills to the business environment (HKIVE, 2007c). Parents' concern about students' education often focuses on future earning power and career prospects, and this programme helps students understand careers and prospects. To ascertain the effectiveness of this programme, employers were asked to help appraise students' performance upon completion of the programme. From the Business Promotion and Event Management (BPEM) course in summer 2004, only 28 out of a total 80 students (appropriately 32 %) joined that summer's internship. Students are evaluated in nine areas: discipline, self-confidence, responsibility, work attitude, learning attitude, work competence, language proficiency, interpersonal relationship and communication. The data revealed that 87% of employers rated our students' performance as excellent or good.

Employers' comments on the benefits accruing to students are summarised below:

- Generate much more ideas
- Continuous exposure to market knowledge and implementation will be helpful to careers
- Learn how to relax and face new challenges with self-confidence
- Acquire more knowledge and more practical experience in promotional programs
- Enhance the creative thinking elements in event management

(HKIVE 2004b, Student Attachment Programme Evaluation Report)

Employers noted certain employability skills such as self-confidence, time management skills, creative thinking and market knowledge that students needed to improve in order to face new challenges. All these skills form a vital part of learning.

Summary

In summary, the following table summaries the time allocated for personal development education:

Table 9: Contact hours in personal education

Creativity, Action and Service	Integrated Studies	Final Year Project	Student Attachment Programme (Optional)
60 hours	60 hours	60 hours	200 hours

Students' responses from CAS module and comments from employers for SAP regarding the personal education are positive. Skills can be enhanced through group work as noted in FYP and IS. Different teaching strategies are applied in delivering personal education as discussed: service learning in CAS, project-based learning in the FYP, self-learning in IS and workplace learning in SAP.

4.3 Survey Research Findings

Part 1: Degree of satisfaction in college life

Average scores were calculated by using the formula of $\sum \text{Score} \times \text{ResponseRate}$ for each question, to ascertain the extent of student satisfaction at HKIVE. For example, if 70% of HRM students give an unsatisfied response (3 points) and 30% give a satisfied response (4 points), the full score is 3.3. In addition to calculating mean scores to measure the degree of satisfaction for each factor (1-14), it was also possible to describe the characteristics of the distribution in terms of how widely dispersed mean scores were among different groups. As noted by Blaikie (2003, p.83), when the sample or population size is less than 40, standard deviation is an important measurement and the divisor of the standard deviation needs to be n-1. The standard deviation equation applied in this study is as follows:

$$\text{Standard deviation: } \sigma_x = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2 / n - 1}$$

x_i = average scores for the i th factors

Mean = the average of the summation for the i th factors

n - 1 = number of factors considered

Using a six point scale, the students' overall responses are presented in Table 10 as follows:

Table 10: HKIVE college life satisfaction ratings

Average scores on factors	Course HRM (Level 1)	BIS (Level 2- Group 1)	BIS (Level 2- Group 2)	CAS (Level 3)	Academic (Level 3)	Leadership (Level 3)	Project Group (Level 4)	Mean (Factor _{i/7})	Standard Deviation
1. Relationship with teachers	3.7	4.23	4.14	4.47	4.50	3.84	3.54	4.06	0.38
2. Relationship with course mates	4.03	4.33	4.17	4.66	4.17	4.74	4.46	4.37	0.27
3. Course content	3.86	3.36	3.85	4.39	4.00	3.42	3.74	3.80	0.35
4. Teaching methodology	4.10	3.84	3.75	4.24	4.00	3.55	3.54	3.86	0.27
5. Attitude of teachers	3.87	4.20	3.89	4.00	4.33	3.48	3.78	3.94	0.41
6. Attitude of course mates	3.70	4.18	3.86	4.43	4.17	4.02	4.07	4.06	0.24
7. Academic achievement	3.80	3.92	3.65	4.06	4.16	3.48	3.46	3.79	0.27
8. Employability skills acquisition	3.90	3.65	2.95	4.15	4.00	3.71	3.80	3.74	0.39
9. Life skills acquisition	3.88	3.40	3.25	4.28	3.84	3.41	3.40	3.64	0.37
10. Job attachment programme	N/A	2.53	2.60	3.10	0.85	1.97	2.12	2.16	0.71
11. Peer mentorship programme*	N/A	2.45	2.05	2.47	0.99	1.52	1.68	1.59	0.89
12. Other activities organized by SAO	2.65	1.35	1.89	1.61	0	1.12	0.52	1.31	0.88
13. Other extra-curricular activities	3.04	2.59	2.75	3.27	2.84	3.07	1.32	2.70	0.64
14. Overall College life	3.78	3.81	3.40	3.92	4.5	3.81	4.08	3.90	0.34

* Peer mentorship program was only offered to level two and level three students, therefore, the Human Resource Management sample group (Level one) did not indicate their score in the survey.

Of the 134 participants in the study sample, average scores of less than three include the job attachment programme, peer mentorship programme, other activities organised by the Student Affairs Office and other extra-curricular activities. These activities fall within personal development and were not offered in the formal curriculum. Therefore, no relevant departmental documents could be accessed by this study. However, this lack of documents does not adversely affect the study because the findings are further examined from the educators' perspective to confirm the validity and reliability of the data. Findings also indicate standard deviation ranging from 0.24 (attitude of course mates, factor 6) to 0.89 (peer mentorship programme, factor 11). According to data, students rated the top mean scores of 4.37 imply a good relationship with course mates (factor 2), and suggests that students preferred to approach their classmates when problem arise, as indicated in Table 11 (question 1.5.2), below:

Table 11: Findings from survey research – Part I Q1.2-Q1.8

Question \ Course	HRM Level 1	BIS (Level 2- Group 1)	BIS (Level 2- Group 2)	CAS (Level 3)	Leadership (Level 3)	Academic (Level 3)	Project Group (Level 4)
1.2 Average study hours	6.1 hours	5hours	6.05 hours	4.5 hours	4 hours	4.98 hours	4.3 hours
1.3 No special skills	100%	55%	68%	82%	47%	83%	83%
1.4 Have Leadership role	23%	25%	29%	9%	6%	17%	44%
1.5 Have college problem	74%	58%	80%	74%	75%	50%	87%
1.5.1 Majority problem involved	study	financial	financial	financial	study	study	financial
1.5.2 Prefer to approach others to get help	friends	classmates	classmates	classmates	classmates	classmates	parents
1.6 Agree that skills are enhanced through learning at college	85%	79%	83%	95%	88%	100%	100%
1.8 Have a life aspiration	10%	24%	47%	37%	76%	50%	87%

According to the findings presented in Table 11, students spent 4 to 6.1 hours on average in study. In addition, there are upward trend of skills enhancement from lower form students (HRM, Level one – 100%) to higher form (Project Group, Level four – 83%). Students may face problems either in study or financially and they may seek help from peers (5 votes), friends (1 vote) or parents (1 vote).

Part 2: Key Competencies at HKIVE

Since competency can be developed through informal learning such as joining the peer mentorship programme or other extracurricular activities, the second part of the survey research was designed to enable students assess their own competencies. The framework followed the VTC's 'Key Skills for the 21st Century' (see section 2.4.2) including fundamental skills, personal management skills and teamwork skills and skills extracted from the life skills module syllabus. Students were invited to rank the top 10 competencies out of 21 competencies covering employability skills and life skills acquired at HKIVE (Tsing Yi). The results are summarized in Table 12 below:

Table 12: Students' perceptions of key competencies

Course/Group Competency	HRM Level 1	BIS Level 2 (Gp 1)	BIS Level 2 (Gp 2)	CAS Level 3	Project Group Level 4	Academic Level 3	Leadership Level 3	Total no. of groups
1. Communication skills	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	7
2. Managing information	5			4	6			3
3. Using numbers								0
4. Creative thinking			7	6	7		1	4
5. Problem solving	3	2	6	3	1	2	3	7
6. Positive attitude	5		6	3				3
7. Positive behaviours	5				7		5	3
8. Responsibility	4	2		7	7	1	4	6
9. Continuous learning	5					3		2
10. Working safely	5	3						2
11. Work with others		1	4	3	4	4	1	6
12. Participating in projects and tasks								0
13. Interpersonal skills	3				7	3		3
14. Social skills		2	5	5		4		4
15. Language proficiency								
- Cantonese								0
- English	2	2	5	2	5	2	5	7
- Potonghua		3	8			4		3
16. Self improvement			3			4	4	3
17. Time management		2	2	7		1	4	5
18. Presentation skills		3		4			5	3
19. Survival skills								0
20. Handling stress		3			3	4		3
21. Implementing change								0

Students identified 18 competencies (shown in Table 12) as particularly important to acquire at HKIVE. However, using numbers (item 3), participating in projects and tasks (item 12),

language proficiency – Cantonese (item 15), survival skills (item 19) and implementing change (item 21) garnered no responses. All groups believed that communication skills (item 1), problem solving (item 5) and English proficiency (item 15) were amongst the top 3 most important competencies.

Closed questions were also used in Part 2 to gauge student perceptions of the delivery of key skills, and the findings are as follows:

Table 13: Students’ perceptions of course delivery of Key Skills

Course Response rate	HRM Level 1	BIS Level 2 -(Gp 1)	BIS Level 2-(Gp 2)	CAS Level 3	Project Group Level 4	Academic Level 3	Leadership Level 3	Overall Average
Yes	10%	83%	58%	79%	36%	17%	81%	52%
No	90%	17%	42%	21%	64%	83%	19%	48%

Part 3: Student competency profiles

These self-assessed competency profiles of students using six-point scales enabled students to undertake self-assessment regarding current requirements and future expectations. This tool was also used to test students’ self-assessment ability and to identify skills that urgently needed to be enhanced. Average scores were calculated for each competency against current needs and future needs (Appendix A, Part 3). The formula of $\sum \text{Score} \times \text{ResponseRate}$ was used to ascertain mean scores for each competency at different point of the scales. Then, the percentage change between the current mean scores and future mean scores was calculated. The results are summarised in Table 14 below:

Table 14: Change of mean scores for each competency

Course / Group \ Competency	HRM Level 1	BIS Level 2- Gp 1	BIS Level 2- Gp 2	CAS Level 3	Project Group Level 4	Academic Level 3	Leadership Level 3	Overall mean
1. Communication skills	+40.7%	+40.9%	+24.8%	+29.4%	+37.7%	+52.3%	+25.2%	36%
2. Managing information	+35.6%	+32.9%	+28.09%	+31.5%	+49.5%	+52.3%	+28.7%	37%
3. Using numbers	+34.1%	+25.5%	+23.9%	+26.2%	+34.3%	+37.3%	+16%	28%
4. Creative thinking	+37.5%	+30.6%	+23%	+38.3%	+37.7%	+125.5%	+26.7%	46%
5. Problem solving	+36.7%	+41.4%	+20.9%	+33.2%	+53.2%	+41.8%	+32.6%	37%
6. Positive attitude	+30.7%	+25.4%	+17.8%	+23.2%	+30.6%	+34.6%	+18.2%	26%
7. Positive behaviours	+30.4%	+28.8%	+16.2%	+23%	+25.8%	+36.3%	+16.8%	25%
8. Be responsible	+29.1%	+22.2%	+15.9%	+23.9%	+24.1%	+31%	+19.4%	24%
9. Learn continuously	+35.7%	+30.1%	+14.5%	+32.2%	+42.3%	+48.1%	+16.1%	31%
10. Work safely	+22.5%	+21.2%	+14.9%	+31.6%	+30.7%	+36.5%	+18.6%	25%
11. Work with others	+37.9%	+28.5%	+14.8%	+29.8%	+34%	+45.2%	+21.7%	30%
12. Participate in projects and tasks	+32.3%	+32.6%	+16.1%	+32.6%	+23.7%	+31.9%	+27%	28%
13. Interpersonal skills	+34.3%	+31.2%	+17.1%	+30.5%	+36.6%	+47.7%	+23.3%	32%
14. Social skills	+38.3%	+32.9%	+19.3%	+39.3%	+37.3%	+47.3%	+28.4%	35%
15. Language proficiency	+44.5%	+39.5%	+18.4%	+36.5%	+41.7%	+65.2%	+32.8%	40%
16. Self improvement	+37.6%	+29.3%	+17.4%	+37.1%	+45.2%	+45.2%	+33.1%	35%
17. Time management	+43.6%	+34.7%	+26.1%	+100%	+41.9%	+77.7%	+33.4%	51%
18. Presentation skills	+31.5%	+43.2%	+28.5%	+32.5%	+40.5%	+77.1%	+38.9%	42%
19. Survival skills	+40.6%	+35.9%	+15.5%	+28.7%	+31.9%	+52.3%	+29.9%	34%
20. Handling stress	+45.1%	+39.3%	+14.5%	+26.1%	+35.7%	+55.3%	+26.7%	35%
21. Implementing change	+38.2%	+24.6%	+11.7%	+22.7%	+42.5%	+47.4%	+19.5%	30%

Overall, the results indicate an upward trend ranging from 24% (responsibility, item 8) to 51% (time management, item 17). When increasing rate over 70% is chosen, three competencies are selected including creative thinking (academic level, +125%), time management (CAS, +100%; academic level, +77.7%) and Presentation skills (academic level, +77.1%). Time management is expected to be improved the most to meet with future challenge, because more tasks need to be handled as they grow up with overall mean increased by 51%, item 17.

Part 4: Developmental Training Needs

In question 4.1 (Appendix A), students were asked to rank their top three methods that could be used in the Personal Development Programme (PDP). Thirteen different training methods were suggested, as shown in Table 15. Frequency was calculated using the preference indicator (i.e. $\frac{f}{N}$) with the equation of frequencies (f) divided by number of responses (N). The results were then ranked to provide an insight into students' preferred training methods. The results were as follows:

Table 15: Student choices of training methods in the PDP

Course Training Methods	HRM Level 1	BIS Level 2 (Gp 1)	BIS Level 2 (Gp 2)	CAS Level 3	Project Group Level 4	Academic Level 3	Leadership Level 3	Frequency
1. Traditional lecturing								0
2. Small group tutoring	3		1	3			1	4
3. Self-learning with independent learning pack								0
4. Summer training workshops				2	2			2
5. Action learning (work-related projects).		1	1	1	1	1	2	6
6. Peer learning (Peer Mentorship Programme).								0
7. E-learning platform		2						1
8. Learning with tutor and buddies (e.g. Supplementary Instruction Programme).			2			1	3	3
9. Learning with same counselor assigned for 4 years						1		1
10. Individual tutored learning with the same tutor for 4 years	2		2					2
11. Distance learning								0
12. Project work	1	3			3			3
13. Networking activities						1	3	2

Those items with a frequency greater than 3 include action learning (item 5, 6 votes), small group tutoring (item 2, 4 votes), learning support (item 8, 3 votes) and project learning (item 12, 3 votes). Fewer students believe that training workshops (item 4), individual tutoring (item 10), and alumni (item 13) are good methods to deliver personal development. None of

the students in the sample agree that lecturing (item 1), self-learning with independent learning package (item 3), peer mentoring (item 6) and distance learning (item 11) were suitable training methods. Another important issue concerns training methods to be developed next three years by HKIVE. See Table 16 below:

Table 16: Ranking activities to be enhanced in the next 3 years

Course Training Method	HRM Level 1	BIS Level 2 (Gp 1)	BIS Level 2 (Gp 1)	CAS Level 3	Project Group Level 4	Academic Level 3	Leadership Level 3	Frequency
1. Enhance the academic programme (with the university).	1	1			2		3	4
2. Develop new training courses (soft skills).		2	1	1	3	2	2	6
3. Professional accreditation	2	2			1			3
4. Provide more cross-border visits								0
5. Offer more workplace attachment opportunities				3		2	1	3
6. Provide more company visits	3	3	2	2				4
7. Parents to be mentors								0
8. Provide more exchange programmes		2	2		3	1		4

The following have frequencies of 4 or above: articulation (item 1); soft skills training workshop (item 2); company attachment (item6); exchange programmes (item 8). Finally, students were invited to choose their preferred learning methods in the Personal Development

Programme. 127 out of 134 students (95%) supported the launch of a programme to identify their learning needs. Students were asked to select their preferred structure as follows:

Table 17: Students' views on the Structure of Personal Development Programme

	HRM Level 1	BIS Level 2 (Gp 1)	BIS Level 2(Gp 1)	CAS Level 3	Project Group Level 4	Academic Level 3	Leadership Level 3	Average
A. Type:								
- Workshop	65%	95%	55%	86%	88%	67%	65%	75%
- Informal Gathering	35%	5%	45%	14%	12%	33%	35%	25%
B. Duration:								
- 6 months programme	44%	55%	26%	55%	47%	33%	35%	42%
- 1 year programme	44%	35%	47%	23%	53%	50%	53%	44%
- 2 year programme	12%	10%	16%	13%	0%	17%	6%	11%
- Other (3 months)	0%	0%	11%	9%	0%	0%	6%	3%
C. Frequency of meeting:								
- Once per month	44%	30%	33%	54%	73%	50%	71%	51%
- Two times per quarter	39%	50%	56%	23%	13%	50%	23%	36%
- Twice a year	17%	20%	11%	23%	7%	0%	0%	11%
- Others	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	6%	2%
D. Days of Week:								
- During weekdays	64%	50%	71%	62%	80%	83%	81%	70%
- During weekends-	36%	50%	29%	38%	20%	17%	19%	30%
E. Meeting Time:								
- During school hours	61%	47%	28%	44%	33%	80%	64%	51%
- After school hours	35%	47%	44%	26%	33%	20%	12%	31%
- Combination of the above	4%	6%	28%	30%	34%	0%	24%	18%
F. Tutor / Person in charge:								
- Academic staffs	17%	25%	20%	28%	20%	29%	22%	23%
- Students Affairs Officer	39%	35%	35%	40%	10%	14%	22%	28%
- Professional Counsellor assigned by the department	22%	15%	30%	16%	35%	14%	28%	23%
- Professional Counsellor assigned by the SAO	22%	25%	15%	16%	25%	43%	17%	23%
- Other Institute or Mentor	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	11%	3%

Students also provide open response from the group of Leadership as follow:

“More creative programme, activity-based learning should be advocated. Students believe themselves are full of creative thinking and the curriculum should be focus on training of creativity competency.”

Summary

In summary, the first phase of findings indicates students were not satisfied with personal development education at HKIVE. Secondly, students were given the opportunity to assess key competencies at HKIVE and, thirdly, the survey suggested student competency increased as skills are transferred from college to the workplace. Finally, students indicated their preferred trainings methods in personal development: the soft skills training workshop and the experiential learning model emerged as preferred choices.

4.4 Qualitative research findings: Educators

Introduction

Personal interviews were conducted from May to July 2006 to explore the survey findings and discuss issues related to student personal development at HKIVE. Research findings are organised below in relation to the main categories within interview transcripts. Research questions are presented at the beginning of each section and the findings presented thus: discussion of the existing personal development system, future advancements in support, pedagogy and curricula, programme design and constraints.

Discussion of the existing personal development system

Three main questions were addressed, provided the background of personal development at HKIVE. The relevant research questions are as follows:

Question 1: Does Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (HKIVE) have a system to promote personal development? If yes, what is the system?

Question 2: Does the Higher Diploma course at HKIVE incorporate co-curricular activities such as the peer mentorship programme and overseas visit in the formal syllabus? If not, should there be an integrated programme to promote students' personal development at HKIVE?

Question 6: What types of co-curricular activities can be incorporated into the curriculum?

In response to the above questions, six out of eight educators agreed that there was a system of promoting personal development at HKIVE. They noted that students took formal modules such as Key Skills, Integrated Studies, Life Skills, the Enhancement Programme and China Business Studies which comprise personal development education. Co-curricular activities such as work experience (Student Attachment Programme), cross-border visits, the peer mentorship programme, the supplemental instruction programme, field visits, and guest lectures also formed part of personal development education at HKIVE.

The question of how the existing system helped students to develop was discussed by a Senior Lecturer in Business Administration, as follows:

Ia2: “I believe that if students participate in these programmes, students can definitely add value to the personal development aspect. For example, full participation in co-curricular activities can improve communication skills and build up confidence gradually. These competences are really important elements to help personal development.”

In addition, another senior project officer also commented on the advantages of participating in co-curricular activities:

Ia4: “Students can have practical experience through joining the student attachment programme. By attending guest lectures, students can develop a better understanding of industry through experiencing this professionalism.”

However, the same project officer and an experience Principal Lecturer argued that courses did not take into account specific student needs, and were mainly designed to cater for the market by providing workforce training:

Ia4: “The existing programme is a bit general to cover personal development aspects. It does not seem to really focus on specific needs.”

Ia5: “Existing courses are not designed to take account of students’ needs, but mainly address industry needs.”

The effectiveness of the existing programmes was also discussed, and only two educators out of eight agreed with the findings from the survey research on students’ perceptions of

key competencies and student competency profiles. Only one respondent agreed that courses incorporated the majority of the identified competencies into the formal curriculum. A Senior Lecturer discussed the issue of incorporating specific competences into the curriculum:

Ia2: “Creative thinking, positive attitude, responsibility and handling stress are quite difficult to incorporate in the existing curriculum. I don’t have any solution to reinforce the competency I just mention. I think all those competencies fall within personal ethics and should be built up gradually through formal and informal learning.”

As to whether the college should develop a structured personal development programme, two educators’ supported this, two educators did not, and four made no comments on this issue.

Future advancement in support

Another question was what kind of personal development system and support system should be developed to support personal development opportunities at HKIVE. Educators provided insights into current system as well as any possible future improvements to personal development education at HKIVE. Three research questions were used:

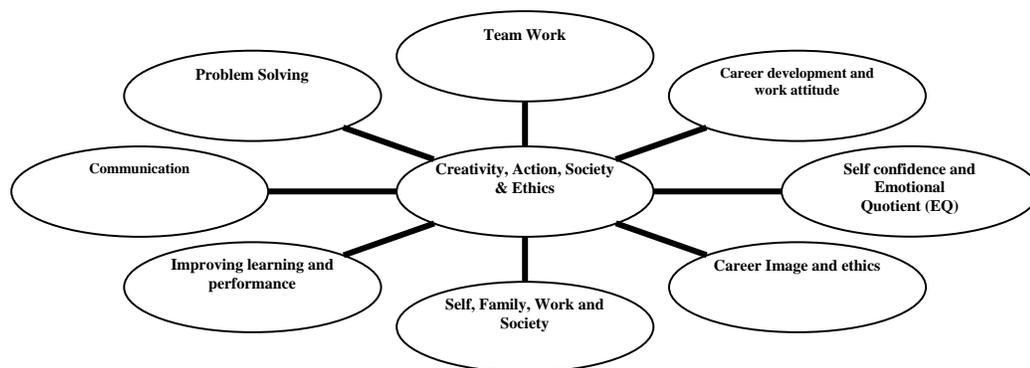
Question 4: Is a whole person development approach proposed in the VTC Strategic Plan to catering for students’ personal needs? Who is responsible for this?

Question 5: Do you think that new VTC curriculum structures (in the light of 3+3+4 education reform) incorporate the whole-school approach promoting personal development at HKIVE?

Question 7: From your professional standpoint, could you give some suggestions on the kinds of support which could be provided to facilitate students' personal development?

According to the senior project officer (Ia3), the Structured Whole Person Development (SWPD) Programme was addressed in the 3 year strategic plan 2007-2010. SWPD aims to equip students with appropriate transferable skills, attitudes and values within the context of Hong Kong and China, to enhance competency, confidence and effective communication, lifelong learning, responsibility, ethics, and physical and psychological health (SWPD Progress Report 2007). The SWPD is to be rolled out in the 2007/2008 academic year. The structure of the SWPD is centered on Creativity, Action, Society and Ethics (known as CASE), with eight attributes surrounding the core, as follows:

Figure 4: The Structured Whole Person Development Programme (SWPD)



Evidence indicated that the existing VTC personal development system was not effective. There was a clear need for change and thus the launch of SWPD. A senior officer (new curriculum) said:

Ia4: “The VTC curriculum structure is going to change in or before 2010 in order to reflect the ‘3+3+4’ education reform. The VTC will incorporate life long learning skills (i.e. transferable skills) to form a single subject. All personal skills will be addressed in the new curriculum.”

Another lecturer (Ia1) noted that change might not be successful unless the VTC gave its full backing and there was active student participation:

Ia1: “I may suggest that this co-curricular activity should be supported by different departments. Change cannot be implemented unless there is full support from different departments and students feel involved.”

Other respondents ranging from lecturers to a Head of Department also supported these comments and discussed improving the delivery of courses and changing the mindset of staff to support the development of personal development education:

Ia2: “From my point of view, other subject(s) can integrate personal development issues in the formal curriculum so it can be assessed formally. However, this may not be successful without the full support of staffs. Staff members need to believe that personal development

issues are really important to students. This implies that lecturers not only deliver knowledge to students, but also enhance students' personal development.”

Ia5: “We should change our colleagues' and students' outlook and fully utilise organisation resources to facilitate students' personal development needs.”

Ia6: “I think that we have to change students' mindset to improve their employability skills. I suggest academic staff, counselors and student affair officers should be involved in personal development aspects as well.”

One experienced training consultant (Ia8) suggested that the lecturers should have a “coaching and counseling role model” in order to enhance student personal development.

Pedagogy and Curricula

Pedagogy and curriculum issues, competency and teaching methods were also discussed, using four research questions, as follows:

Question 3: Is any formal assessment incorporated in co-curricular activities?

Question 8: Do you think that HKIVE courses already incorporate all the relevant competencies in the formal curriculum?

Question 9: Can you suggest way to help HKIVE students develop the required competencies?

Question 10: What do you think of the response by students to the new Personal Development Programme (PDP)? Can the knowledge and experience gained through the PDP be recognised by the VTC and the employer, and form a part of the formal departmental curriculum?

In personal interviews, three out of eight educators, including one senior lecturer (Ia2), one senior project officer (Ia3) and one student counsellor (Ia7), noted that certain skills might be difficult to incorporate in the formal curriculum. They agreed that informal learning or co-curricular activities could develop employability skills:

Ia2: “Creative thinking, positive attitude, responsibility and handling stress are quite difficult to incorporate in the existing curriculum....competencies should be built up gradually through formal and informal learning.”

Ia3: “Our course did not incorporate all the competencies in the formal curriculum such as creative thinking, English oral, and responsibility.”

Ia7: “It is difficult to incorporate all competencies in the formal curriculum. I believe that skills can be developed through informal learning instead.”

Possible methods to help students to develop competencies were also addressed. Two respondents commented that the new system of the Structured Whole Person Development Programme could enhance personal development education at HKIVE:

Ia7: “The new system namely Structured Whole Person Development Programme (SWPD) can help our students to develop the expected competencies in certain circumstances.”

With role of informal learning as well as the possible benefits of SWPD acknowledged, student assessment methods were then explored by a training consultant:

Ia8: “Company projects are evaluated by an external examiner. Students work as an employee of the company project.”

This suggests that fully utilising societal resources is important. A senior project officer and the same training consultant provided further insights into competency-based assessment and peer group evaluation as approaches to assess the effectiveness of informal learning:

Ia1: “Teachers have to think of certain activities to motivate students to learn outside classroom, and then report back as part of formal assessment.”

Ia4: “A competency based approach is a possible method to assess the level of attainment and the grading will be Pass/Fail.”

Ia8: “The PDP does not incorporate formal assessment sufficiently. Certain kinds of assessment such as peer group and also external evaluation have to be built in”

One language lecturer argued that formal assessment including a test, report, presentation and examination, could be used to assess students' informal learning.

One senior lecturer said that students discussed the use of portfolios for assessment:

Ia2: "Students are required to submit a portfolio by the end term to show evidence of skills enhancement. In addition, competencies can be rather intangible and quite difficult to measure."

A Principal Lecturer discussed the culture and mindset of staff:

Ia5: "The most effective way is to change organisation culture and colleagues' mindset so that competencies can be easily incorporated into curriculum. I strongly believe most employers are looking to hire those with good competencies such as problem solving skills and other competencies."

Assessment issues were discussed in section 2.9 and the general background of performance and learning was discussed in the literature review. As laid out in SWPD progress report (VTC 2007b), the following elements are proposed for the SWPD:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Class exercise: worksheet and reflective journal | 25% |
| 2. Quiz | 20% |
| 3. Camp Performance | 15% |
| 4. Worksheet on self-evaluation in camp | 10% |

5. Activity Record	15%
6. Presentation	15%

Mixed assessment methods are designed to measure students' performance in co-curricular activities. Marks are allocated for each assessment and further examination of this issue will be explored further in Chapter 6 (Implication for policy and practice in VTC).

Programme Design

One of the objectives of this study was to explore possible improvements to personal development education at HKIVE. As discussed in section 4.4.3, the VTC intends to develop a new system, namely the SWPD, to address student personal development. A Principal Lecturer, who advised the new programme, said that it should also be focused on developing good attitudes:

Ia5: "The programme should not only focus on competency training, but also on helping students develop as an individual. Recognition by the employer is not an important issue, but it is most important that we train up our students to have a good attitude in learning and working. Once a good attitude is developed, students can be trained and develop competencies to contribute to workplace and the community. Lastly, I would like to point out that the PDP should be based on individual needs and aim to develop personal identity."

The above contribution focuses on the important issue of 'attitude'. It was also noted that employer recognition of the programme should not be the main concern. These comments

were supported by another respondent, from the Student Affairs Office, who emphasised that the programme should develop ‘quality’:

Ia7: “Employers judge the programme on whether or not it produces good, employable people. However, this takes time and I think the new programme should focus on developing quality.”

The question of the delivery of a personal development programme was also discussed. Two respondents suggested workshops, such as a career workshop and general skills workshop (Ia4) or a teambuilding workshop, leadership workshop and process restructuring workshop (Ia8).

Constraints

Constraints and potential problems were also discussed by educators:

Ia4: “As far as I know, the student attachment programme only offers to second year students placement in industry for a month. This period may be too short for students to acquire necessary knowledge and skills. The placement should be of longer duration so that the learners’ knowledge and skills be enhanced further. In addition, the programme must be designed around students’ personal interests and assessment tailored to the activity. Also, the person-in-charge should be an appropriate person.”

Ia5: “Resources cannot accommodate all students’ needs. Outcome and results are not always obvious and certain goals may not be achieved even after student attachment. A more flexible system should be adopted in commercial situations.”

Ia6: “Operation differs between campuses and there may be problems in implementation as well. I suggest there should be clearer objectives and greater uniformity across campuses.”

Ia7: “Existing programme need to be structured to cater for students’ needs. All co-curricular activities need to be grouped together to form a formal curriculum namely SWPD. Top management will provide materials/resources to staffs to deliver the SWPD.”

In summary, four educators commented on certain constraints: Ia4 (time and people), Ia5 (programme design), Ia6 (implementation), Ia7 (programme structure). These issues were explored further in personal interviews with human resource practitioners.

Summary

Personal development is implemented formally on a modular basis and informally through participation in extracurricular activities. Evidence here shows that the existing programme is too generalised and does not focus on personal needs. The majority of respondents say that HKIVE courses do not incorporate all competencies in the formal curriculum. Regarding pedagogy and curricula, it was agreed that informal learning is important in the development of skills. Educators note that no single method can assess all competencies: assessment methods are tailored to activities. Other suggestions regarding assessment

methods include use of external assessors, peers evaluation and portfolios. Competency-based assessment is also recommended.

As suggested by respondents, the programme can be designed around students' personal needs and should help learners to develop the right attitude to learning. Positive learning attitude are key to lifelong learning, and successful, gainful employment. To develop personal development education at HKIVE, certain issues need to be addressed, including time, funding resources, leadership, organisation, programme design, implementation and senior support.

4.5 Qualitative research findings: Human Resource Practitioners

Introduction

Human resource practitioners (employers) were interviewed from June to August 2006. The research findings are organised and presented according to the five main categories in the interview summary report. The research questions are presented at the beginning of each section and the findings are presented in the following order: personal qualification, competency requirements, training and development, teaching and learning, programme structure and programme recognition.

Personal Qualifications

The first question addressed the type of qualified people human resource practitioners want to recruit. This provides insight into the desired balance between academic qualification and competencies.

Question 1: What kind of people does your company prefer to recruit?

In response to this question, academic qualifications and competencies were addressed by four respondents. Qualifications were needed for candidates to be considered for posts, but at the same time employers look for specific competencies. A Personnel Strategy and Relations Manager explained that:

Iep5: “Basically, it depends on whether the post is a technical or operation purpose one:

- A pilot is a technical post and top quality professional qualifications are required.
- Frontline operations require customer focused staff, with good social skills, with a fair minded and honest attitude.”

A Human Resource Officer (Iep2) also noted the importance of customer service skills in front-line staff:

Iep2: “We intend to recruit someone who has a people orientated mindset and good services skills.”

Another respondent, from the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management, made similar observations about how people skills and team building are important competencies:

Iep3: “It depends on the type of post. We are looking for fresh graduates with good analytical powers, interpersonal skills, language ability, who are creative thinkers, as well as being players”

Competency Requirement

The second research question addresses recruitment and selection:

Question 2: Which competencies are the most important to your company? Please list the top five.

Six interviewees discussed the 21 competencies in Table 18 below:

Table 18: Views on competencies from Human Resources Practitioners

Competencies	Respondent	Iep1	Iep2	Iep3	Iep4	Iep5	Iep6	Response
1. Communication		√	√		√		√	4
2. Customer focus		√						1
3. Business Understanding		√						1
4. Personal effectiveness		√						1
5. Creativity		√		√			√	3
6. Service mind-set			√					1
7. Working experience			√		√			2
8. Language proficiency (Chinese, English & Mandarin)			√	√				2
9. Outgoing and friendly			√					1
10. Analytical Power				√				1
11. Interpersonal Skills				√	√			2
12. Good team spirit				√		√		2
13. Knowledge					√			1
14. Independent					√			1
15. Professionalism						√		1
16. Proactive						√		1
17. Willing to learn						√		1
18. Networking						√		1
19. Leadership							√	1
20. Problem solving							√	1
21. Negotiation							√	1

21 competencies were identified from personal interviews with human resource practitioners. The top six competencies included communication skills ranked as the top (item 1, 4 votes), creativity ranked as the second important competencies to be required (item 5, 3 votes), working experience (item 7, 2 votes), language proficiency (item 8, 2 votes); interpersonal skills (item 11, 2 votes) and good team spirit (item 12, 2 votes). The remaining competencies have only one group selected. Comparative analysis of the findings, listed in section 4.3.2, Table 12, will be explored in next chapter.

Training and Development

Five respondents provided views on the question of training and development, addressed by the following research question:

Question 3: What sort of training is the most useful in developing the top 5 competencies you mention in question 2?

An experienced human resources practitioner (Iep1) suggested experiential learning was one way to encourage students to expand their knowledge:

Iep1: “Skills can develop through experiential learning. As a professional human resource manager, I encourage staff to experience different situations through job rotation. By doing so, staff can familiarise themselves with frontline operations through hands on experience. Importantly, staff members not only learn about business in the most effective way, but also improve personal effectiveness and learn initiatively.”

Two respondents commented on in-house training. An Accreditation Manager (Iep3) suggested the use of non-structured in-house courses. A Human Capital Management Officer (Iep4) said in-house training should be provided when required, and staff members need to take the initiative to develop personal development plans:

Iep3: “At HKIHRM, we normally provide in-house language training, and courses in interpersonal skills and teambuilding in an unstructured format.”

Iep4: “Our firm offers in-house training for staff to enhance certain skills on a needs basis. Staff members are required to produce individual development plans worked out with their supervisor. The plan should include competencies and goals that need to be achieved.”

A Personnel Strategy and Relations Manager (Iep5) from a large Hong Kong based airline suggested that online training should allow staff to learn at their own pace:

Iep5: “We expect people to learn proactively. We have an online system for our staff to learn through the web. Learning resources are uploaded for staff to learn at their own pace, using a selection of 400 modules. There is a record to keep track of the modules and time taken. This learning model aims to demonstrate a willingness to learn proactively.”

Different methods, including experiential learning, in-house training and online learning were all discussed by the interviewees. Finally, Senior Human Resource Manager (Iep6) noted:

Iep6: “There is no one single training method for these very different competencies.”

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning methods were also explored through personal interviews. Respondents discussed the findings of the survey research (section 4.3.4, Part 4 Survey results) and provided further insights, as follows:

Question 4: Can you suggest ways to help HKIVE students to develop the required competencies?

Project work, competency-based learning, task-based learning and action learning were discussed by three experts:

Iep1: “Your college could adopt project work in teaching and learning. This kind of learning is not just one-way, but includes, for example, role-playing exercises.”

Iep2: “In a classroom setting, communication skills, English speaking and working with others can reinforce project work. A lot of work can take place in groups and students should be made aware of performance indicators. Outside the classroom, extracurricular

activities centered on task-based learning encourage responsibility and positive attitudes.”

Iep4: “I also believe adopting action and project work in teaching and learning are good methods to help students develop. It would also be beneficial if these activities are linked with the businesses. In addition, there should be a good variety of methods: different training workshop, placements and competition.”

Apart from teaching strategies, learning styles were also addressed by a Personnel Strategy and Relations Manager, as follows:

Iep5: “Learning should be based on proactive, personal effort. Successful people priorities their tasks and avoid conflict in groups.”

Programme and Structure

Question five addresses the question of programme structure:

Question 5: Based on the feedback from students, is it feasible to incorporate co-curricular activities in a Personal Development Programme in the future?

5 out of 6 respondents agreed with the findings in section 4.3.4. Also, additional ideas were explored in the personal interviews, such as timeframes, programme design, group sizes, and students’ learning styles:

Iep1: “The PDP can work as a lifetime programme. At the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), learners are required to develop their conduct individual self-assessment in order to discover their training needs.”

Iep3: “I think the programme can track students’ development through monthly meeting with mentors or other staff. Activities and methods should vary to reflect the wide range of competencies that students develop through participation. Learning objectives should be clear.”

Meetings were considered as an important part of the programme. An accreditation manager suggested monthly meetings, in line with the results of the students survey.

The size of groups also emerged as an important issue, as discussed by a Personnel Strategy and Relations Manager, below:

Iep5: “Staff development can be enhanced by work in small groups. The programme should be student focused and be relevant to their needs. Based on a framework provided by students, staffs help students to develop proactively through participation.”

The question of students’ attitudes to learning also emerged as an important factor. A Senior Human Resources Manager noted the following:

Iep6: “I consider learning more effective and more important than training. Changing attitudes is a complex challenge, and a narrow teaching format may make it difficult to achieve the desired results. Students need to see the benefit of putting in extra effort to develop their futures rather than rely on a narrow curriculum in school hours.”

Recognition of the programme

Question six concerned the recognition of the PDP by the employer:

Question 6: Can learning and knowledge gained through the PDP be recognised by employers? If not, how can the programme be improved?

This question elicited a wide range of responses. Two respondents, a Human Resource Officer (Iep2) and a Human Capital Management Officer (Iep4) said that learning experience from the PDP could be recognised by employers in form of a certificate. An Accreditation Manager (Iep3) noted that it took time for employers to become aware. A Personnel Strategy and Relations Manager (Iep5) argued that the issue of recognition was not very important. Their views were as follows:

Iep2: “Yes. A certificate can be presented to students to recognise their achievement. Log sheet can be designed to record students’ performance including feedback from the mentor. I agree with the students’ views on the programme structure and more work-related projects should be provided during the summer or during term time so that students familiarise themselves with business operations.”

Iep3: “I think that this may take time to achieve. The programme will be recognised by the employers as long as the programme directly relates to employers’ needs. The employers will recognise the programme in terms of what students achieve.”

Iep4: “Yes. A certificate can be presented to students. Through the use of interviews, employers can assess the effectiveness of the programme by ascertaining what students learnt.”

Iep5: “We recruit employees by choosing the best candidate for the job. The programme’s content or effectiveness is not our concern during recruitment. We have our own assessment methods.”

Ways to improve the programme were discussed by an experienced human resource practitioner, as follows:

Iep1: “Formal assessment should be a part of the PDP programme. Students should submit report illustrating what targets they have set, what they have learnt, and targets they have achieved. If there is any variance between the targets and final results, sufficient reasons should be provided to identify issues of concern. If students successfully achieve all targets within the year, then they need to apply the skills learnt to their future career and goals. Currently, there is mismatching of candidates and jobs. Employers need to recruit the best for the job, from a high quality pool of candidates. Technical skills and soft skills are the key competencies employers are looking for.”

Summary

Through personal interviews with six human resource practitioners, issues relating to qualifications, competencies, training and development, teaching and learning, programme design and recognition were explored. It was noted that competency and knowledge are complementary. Employers use their own recruitment methods to ensure they select the right person for the job. A wide variety of staff training methods was suggested to enhance skills, such as in-house training, online learning and experiential learning. These methods can be delivered in an unstructured format. It was concluded that no single training method can inculcate all competencies.

Teaching strategies include competency-based training, role-playing, action learning, and project work. It was also recommended that learning be based on personal effort, including self-assessment and proactive learning methods. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development learning models were recommended. Recognition of the programme by employers was not seen as the most pressing concern, nor was it seen as crucial in judging the success or not of the programme. The prime concern is the design of the programme to be relevant to students, and develop quality. Last but not the least, half of respondents agreed that a certificate should be presented to students, recognising their achievement in co-curricular participatory activities.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

Data from different sources are analysed in this chapter to ascertain the effectiveness of the HKIVE programme and explore possible improvements to personal development.

5.2 Analysis of documents

Introduction

Findings presented in Chapter 4.2 indicate that HKIVE adopts an integrated approach to personal development education. According to the findings, a modular approach and extracurricular activities through workplace learning are used. Feedback from stakeholders gives insight into possible improvements that can be made to personal education at HKIVE.

Time

180 contact hours were delivered as personal development education, the equivalent of 13% of the entire curriculum, totally 1,400 hours for a 4-year programme. Insufficient hours were allocated to providing personal development education and there is a need to explore further opportunities to provide personal development at HKIVE (Tsing Yi). No full inspection of key and life skill modules was taken as both modules were new in the 2004/2005 academic year and thus outside the research period. This did not affect the results because other modules represent the broader picture of personal development education at HKIVE.

Pedagogy

Six teaching strategies were extracted from the course inspection:

Table 19: Teaching methodologies to deliver personal education at HKIVE

Subjects	CAS	IS	FYP	Key Skills	Life Skills	SAP
Teaching Methodologies						
1. Services learning	√					
2. Project learning		√	√	√		
3. Competency based learning			√	√	√	
4. Task-based learning		√				
5. Workplace learning			√			√
6. Self-learning	√					

The survey shows that project learning is used across five different subjects. By adopting different active learning models, a good supported learning atmosphere helps learners to develop key skills, as confirmed by informants and the literature review (section 2.8). Students exercise choice and creative think creatively.

Feedback from students and employers

According to findings in Table 8, students' average rating of Integrated Studies was 4.79 on a 7 points scale. There is a willingness to accept innovative teaching methodologies. Students' comments are summarised as follows:

Knowledge and skills applicable to service orientated projects

1. Business management knowledge, marketing, accounting and integrated studies
2. Communication, cooperation, organisation, time management. Team spirit.
3. Improve self-confidence in managing.

Knowledge needed for future career

1. Time management, interpersonal skills, responsibility, leadership, team spirit
2. Learn how to set up and run a programme
3. Concern about people in need

Reflective journals

1. Record new skills
2. Document issues, progress and achievements
3. Reflect on feelings and learning progress
4. Help clear thinking and regular project reviews
5. Recall knowledge acquired, integrate appropriate knowledge

Acceptance of Experiential Learning Project

1. Gain experience from doing this
2. Meet up with other people, talk with partners and elders
3. Help me to learn many things and do real business with unforgettable memory
4. Opportunity to practice knowledge learned
5. Help people in need; a good opportunity to contribute to society

Difficulties and issues

1. Seek help from tutor or other staff to clarify how to hold an event
2. Perseverance and stamina
3. Correct staffing levels and personnel to support project work
4. Apply knowledge and find out the correct channel to seek help

5. Suggest the programme can last longer
6. Build up a good network upon finishing the project
7. Difficulty in finding organisers to support the project
8. Spend much time on the project

Students provided positive comments regarding project, task-based and experiential learning in IS. Knowledge and skills acquired are relevant and students use reflective journals to record progress. There were difficulties executing some projects, but students see them as good opportunities to contribute to society, and improve problem-solving skills.

As regards the Students Attachment Programme (SAP), employers suggest a revamp to develop self-confident and creative students (who are prospective employees), with added emphasis on exposure to the market. Such ideas apply to informal learning too.

In summary, the VTC provides personal development education through different teaching strategies. However, evidence suggests that improvement is needed in terms of contact hours, pedagogy and the development of market-driven courses to encourage creative thinking, dynamism, proactivity and self-confidence in students.

5.3 Analysis of Survey Research

Introduction

Findings presented in Section 4.3 will be analysed here. This section focuses on the survey research, analysing the following: satisfaction survey; perceptions of competency;

awareness of skill enhancement; suggestions regarding training methodologies; and the structure of the Personal Development Programme.

Satisfaction Survey

Overall Results

Analysis of data in section 4.3 (Table 10) indicates 65% (3.90 out of 6) students were satisfied with the provision of personal development education at HKIVE (Tsing Yi). There was not much deviation among the groups. The academic group (Level 3) had a top score of 4.5. There is a positive relationship between the satisfaction score and students' academic achievement.

Dissatisfaction with personal development education

Findings indicate students were dissatisfied with co-curricular activities at HKIVE: mean scores below two as discussed in section 4.3 (Part 1: Degree of satisfaction in College life). One way to motivate students is to emphasise formally assessed co-curricular activities. Assessment can take the form of reflective journals (discussed in section 4.2). Clear criteria should be set against activities so students are aware of the requirements of particular tasks (further discussed in section 6.3).

The question of dispersion was measured by standard deviation. The greater the dispersion, the larger the standard deviation (symbolised as σ_x), as presented in Section 4.3 (Table 10). The findings indicate that the top three largest deviations within the group were the job attachment programme ($\sigma = 0.71$, item 10), peer mentorship ($\sigma = 0.89$, item 11), other activities organised by Student Affairs Office ($\sigma = 0.88$, item 12). Higher dispersion

indicates differing student perspectives on personal development education at HKIVE.

Large deviation between levels

By comparing the mean score among different course levels (level 1 - 4) against the unsatisfied items from 10-13, academic group (Level 3) shows the lowest mean scores against other groups. HKIVE students with good academic results are not willing to join any co-curricular activities, as indicated in the results presented in Table 10. The findings for item 12 are selected and shown as follows:

Table 20: Degree of satisfaction at different course levels

Level	HRM (Level 1)	BIS (Level 2) Group 1	Academic (Level 3)	Project Group (Level 4)
12. Other activities organised by SAO				
Mean Scores	2.65	1.89	N/A	0.52
Standard Deviation	0.88			

Mean scores dropped significantly from HRM (level 1) scores of 2.65 to Project Group (level 4) scores of 0.52. Activities organised by the Student Affairs Office do not arouse the interest of final year students. Final year career-oriented activities should be devised.

Poor time management and peer support

Regarding the findings in section 4.3 (Table 11), the majority of students spend an average of 5 hours in study. The results indicate that students do not have special skills to be assessed, and that students lack confidence in learning and lack awareness of their strengths. Time management is also a key concern: only 20% of students' time is devoted to study.

When problem arise, 85% of students prefer to approach classmates or friends rather than parents or the VTC, indicating that a peer support network is important. The college should make use of peer support and develop a good study buddy network.

Goal setting

An important finding relates to the perception of skill enhancement at HKIVE in section 4.3 (Table 11, item 1.6). 90% of respondents agreed that skills were enhanced gradually. Regarding students' life aspirations, the findings indicate a significantly upward trend, from 10% in HRM (level 1) to 87% in FYP (level 4), suggesting that learners clarify their personal goals as they advance through college.

Students' views on competencies

These findings explore the 'truth' from the students' perspective. According to the students' ranking of key competencies, in section 4.3 (Table 12), most students believe that communications (item 1, 7 votes), problem solving (item 5, 7 votes), and English language proficiency (item 15, 7 votes) were the top 3 most important competencies. Also, responsibility (item 8, 6 votes), working with others (item 11, 6 votes) and time management (item 17, 5 votes) are the other important competencies that students would like to develop. Results presented in section 4.3 (Table 13) indicate large variations in students' views between the Business Information Systems in Group 1 with 83% and Group 2 with 58%, a 25% difference in their views of key skills. The findings also indicate a wide variance of student views on the issue of employability skills, even within the same level. Findings for levels 1-4 were shown in section 4.3 (Table 12). Students' views on the top 5 competencies have subsequently been ranked and represented in Table 21 below:

Table 21: Students' views of Key Skills within top 5 levels

Course/Group Competency	HRM Level 1	BIS Level 2 (Gp 1)	BIS Level 2 (Gp 2)	CAS Level 3	Project Group Level 4	Academic Level 3	Leadership Level 3
1. Communication skills	14	6	11	12	13	4	9
2. Managing information	4	4	5	5	4	0	1
3. Using numbers	4	0	1	1	0	0	0
4. Creative thinking	5	1	5	6	4	1	7
5. Problem solving	14	5	9	11	14	0	6
6. Positive attitude	9	3	5	8	2	2	5
7. Positive behaviours	6	2	5	3	5	0	4
8. Responsibility	4	4	6	5	3	4	4
9. Learn continuously	5	0	2	0	1	2	0
10. Work safely	3	3	1	1	0	0	1
11. Work with others	3	4	5	6	3	2	8
12. Participate in project and tasks	2	2	1	1	1	0	0
13. Interpersonal skills	8	0	4	2	5	3	1
14. Social skills	4	4	6	9	2	2	3
15. Language proficiency							
- Chinese	3	4	4	2	3	0	0
- English	8	7	9	10	5	3	5
- Potonghua	3	4	3	2	1	2	4
16. Self improvement	1	3	5	4	3	0	4
17. Time management	3	1	4	4	1	2	4
18. Presentation skills	1	2	0	3	3	1	2
19. Survival skills	2	1	0	1	2	0	1
20. Handling stress	1	2	2	1	5	0	2
21. Implementing change	1	1	0	1	0	0	0

Regarding the skills presented here, a higher number indicates a greater level from the students' perspective. Table 22 summarises students' views on the top three competencies:

Table 22: Comparative table of student views on the top three competencies

Course/Group \ Competency	HRM	BIS (Group 1)	BIS (Group 2)	CAS	Project Group	Academic	Leadership
1.	Communication	English	Communication	Communication	Problem solving	Communication	Communication
2.	Problem solving	Communication	Problem solving	Problem solving	Communication	Be responsible	Work with others
3.	Positive attitude	Problem solving	English	English	-	-	Creative thinking

Results indicate that all students (from HRM to the Leadership group) ranked communication highly, followed by problem solving and English proficiency.

Skills enhancement

According to the findings in table 13, section 4.3 (students' perception of the delivery of key skills), only 52% of students' agree that HKIVE courses help them to gain relevant knowledge and skills. This suggests that a review of HKIVE courses is necessary.

Personal needs

In the student self-assessment findings presented in table 14 (section 4.3), the mean scores range from 24% to 51%, indicating that students have concerns regarding skills training at HKIVE. The top five competencies by overall mean score were time management (51%); creative thinking (46%); presentation skills (42%); language proficiency (40%) and problem solving (37%). These findings suggest that delivery of skills is patchy, indicating that HKIVE should improve courses that deliver personal development education.

Suggested training methodologies

Table 15 (section 4.3) presented student preferred methods in Personal Development Programme (PDP). The findings indicate that students preferred the active learning model which comprises small group tutoring (item 2), action learning (item 5), learning support (item 8) and project learning (item 12). The active learning model is applicable in formal and informal learning environments.

Students also ranked co-curricular activities by preference, as shown in Table 16 in section 4.3. The soft skills enhancement workshop (item 2, 6 votes) was the most popular, followed by university accreditation (item 1, 4 votes), company visits (item 6, 4 votes) and the exchange programme (item 8, 4 votes). These findings indicate that HKIVE students were concerned that a broad range of teaching methods and assessment should be available, reflecting their desire to absorb a broad and relevant range of skills and competencies needed in the modern workplace. Methods chosen by students were broad ranging: university accreditation, workplace attachments, and experiential learning in the shape of the soft skills enhancement programme and exchange programme.

The Personal Development Programme

According to the analysis of the data in section 4.3, students themselves suggested the future shape or structure of the PDP. Majority student suggested that the programme was organised in form of workshop and certificates were preferred to recognise students' learning and achievement (A. Type, 75%). Students suggested that the course should last one year (B. Duration, 44%) and that there should be monthly supervisory meetings (C. Frequency of meeting, 51%). Meeting should be conducted during weekday (D. Days of Week, 70%) and

during school time (E. Meeting Time, 51%). The department-in-charge should be the Student Affairs Office (F. Tutor/Person in charge, 28%). The HKIHRM Continuous Learning Recognition Scheme (CLR) was suggested as an appropriate model, organised in four stages per academic year, comprising a registration period (July-Sept), a learning period (October-June), a reporting period (July-Aug) and a confirmation period (Sept). They argued that students should be required to record their learning progress in the personal development plan. This is discussed further in section 6.3 (A Practical Example).

5.4 Analysis of Personal Interviews with Educators

Introduction

To analyse data, content analysis was employed to identify main themes in the transcripts. In total, four main themes emerged, addressing the study's purpose (discussed in section 1.2) and research questions (in section 3.3, Interviews). The findings grouped around the following themes: structure of the existing personal development system, training strategies, a new structure of Personal Development Programme and limitations of the present system.

Structure of the existing personal development system

According to discussion in Section 4.4, a modular system existed to deliver personal development at HKIVE (Tsing Yi). Respondents agreed that participatory co-curricular activities can form vital support in the development of skills. The Whole Person Development Programme is to be launched by the VTC.

Existing system – formal learning mode

Courses integrated into the existing personal development education system at HKIVE include Integrated Studies, Key Skills, Life Skills and China Business Studies in 2005/2006.

All subjects were assessed formally and formed part of curriculum. However, these modules may not be enough to help students become fully rounded people. Evidence suggests that the existing programme does not provide a sufficient number of contact hours to provide the full range of required skills, knowledge and competencies.

Existing system – informal learning mode

Co-curricular activities such as the Student Attachment Programme, Peer Mentorship Programme and Supplemental Instruction Programme are in the curriculum to enhance personal development education on a voluntary basis. Senior Lecturers note the advantages of co-curricular activities including the enhancement of personal growth and the development of communication skills. Guest lectures also provide good learning opportunities: contact with industry professionals who share first hand experience and knowledge with students in an accessible way. Finally, cross-border visits broaden horizons through experiential learning.

Failings of the existing system

As indicated from survey research, students were not satisfied with co-curricular activities because they were not designed around students' needs. This was further commented on by Senior Project Officer (Ia4) and Principal Lecturer (Ia5). They concluded that the existing programme was too general to cater for student needs. The existing literature suggests that students put extra effort into activities specifically directed towards their goals. Therefore, HKIVE could develop a system that enables students to identify their needs and goals.

Training strategies

The findings show that training strategies in the personal development programme are not as effective as they can be. New ways to support and develop employability skills were discussed and a reformed personal education programme at HKIVE can be outlined.

Competency-based training

Findings presented in section 4.4 (Pedagogy and Curricula) indicate that certain competencies such as positive attitudes, responsibility and handling stress are difficult to incorporate in the existing formal curriculum. Educators, in classrooms or co-curricular activities, should understand that competencies must be clearly addressed to help students through learning, and performance indicators must be clear and transparent, and clearly linked to activities where possible. Educators also suggest formal assessment such as testing, and informal assessment such as portfolios, peer group evaluation and external evaluation, to assess students' performance in co-curricular activities. Therefore, educators have to judge what kind of method is applicable. Findings also indicate that assessment of co-curricular activities is controversial.

Portfolios

Portfolios can assess students' performance. Portfolios are summative evaluations and a method of reflective development. At HKIVE, submission of portfolios was not required before the academic year 2004/2005. As noted in section 2.9, portfolios encourage students' all-round personal development, and are a good way to record students' learning experience, as noted by a Senior Lecturer at HKIVE (Tsing Yi). Crockett argues that portfolios have presentational, documentary and exploratory aspects. These three characteristics are

reflected, to different degrees, in students' work. Portfolios become active learning experiences (Crockett 1998, p.52-53). The college should organise training workshops on portfolios, including the presentation of evidence and self-monitoring. Portfolios can be submitted by students by June (at confirmation stage), before a certificate is granted in September. Portfolios should be the responsibility of students.

Workshops to reinforce self-development

Apart from organising skills workshop for students, two further skills (reflecting and recording) should be included to help students manage personal activities more systematically. The advantages of these skills were addressed by Inskipp (1996) as follows:

Reflecting skills: developing ability and motivation

- The development of an internal 'fair witness' who can stand back and look at the work;
- Perseverance;
- Practice using Interpersonal Process Recall.

Recording skills: developing ability and motivation

- Devise systems of recording that work for the individual, and use them;
- Awareness of ethical and legal issues. (Inskipp 1996, p.62)

The Personal Competency Model

This is adapted from Mudock and Scutt's framework (2003, p.xxix). Students in business administration courses may become future managers. The following is a suggested model of behaviours and skills for students, including 11 behavioural indicators:

Table 23: Personal Competency Model 2006 adapted from Murdock's PCM frame

Behavioural Indicator	Sub-indicators
1. Acting assertively	-
2. Behave ethically	-
3. Building teams	Managing others, relating to others Sharing and working with others Leading others, influencing others
4. Communicating	Good communication in Chinese, English and Mandarin
5. Focusing on results	Planning and prioritising Striving for excellence Managing time Negotiating with people
6. Managing self	Controlling emotions and stress Managing personal learning and development Demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours Responsibility Adaptability, continuous learning Work safely Self improvement, personal effectiveness Outgoing and friendly outlook Independence and proactive attitudes
7. Searching for information	Good analytical mind and presentation skills
8. Interacting with other people	Social skills, interpersonal skills Servicing skills Networking
9. Thinking and decision-making	Creative mind Conceptualising Taking decisions, good problem-solver Good analytical mind
10. Survival Skills	Implementing change, handling stress Lifelong learner Knowledgeable
11. Reflecting and Recording Skills	-

As well as the PCM framework, this model also integrates the VTC employability skills framework. It is designed as a background personal competency framework for HKIVE students.

In summary, competency training is difficult to achieve except when it is based on student's own goal and initiative (proactive learning). The new system may help students develop. However, some respondents argued that informal learning can help to form vital support to develop key skills. Therefore, in all activities (formal and informal) students have to participate actively and learn through self-development and reflection. Portfolio work is one way to improve students' presentational, reflective and recording skills. The personal competency model adapted from Murdock and Scutt outlines certain behaviours that students should be aware of. Through clear explanation, students' learning attitudes can be improved because they come to understand expected and required behaviour and the importance of achievement

The New Personal Development Programme

Because of the recent education reform, the VTC is planning to launch a new programme, the SWPD Programme, a key initiative of the Council's 3-year Strategic Plan (2007-2010). Suggested workshops and activities will be explored in this section.

Reforming the existing system – SWPD

The SWPD will be rolled out in the academic year of 2007/2008 starting from level one. Drawing on British experience and the International Baccalaureate framework, it has the following features:

- a prescribed programme structure as shown in Section 4.4 (Figure 4) with different modules including Improving Learning and Performance (20 hours), Problem-solving (5 hours), Healthy Style (11 hours), Training Camp with main theme of Improving Learning and Creative Problem-solving (9 hours), other activities and assessment (15 hours), which appropriate to suit students' learning needs and targeted to the core value of Creativity, Action, Society and Ethics
- a mix of curricular activities within each module along the SWPD programme ladder, including classroom delivery, physical education, physical fitness training, students presentation, adventure-based education camp, environmental awareness programme, and other activities on campus and in the community

(VTC 2007b, Progress Report of the SWPD)

Two educators believe that the formal Structured Whole Person Development Programme (SWPD) can enhance skill elements. According to the survey of students in section 4.3 (table 11, item 1.8), students lack clear personal goals, especially in the lower form. Therefore, an additional theme (life balance) should be integrated into the SWPD programme to develop awareness of broader life issues, to help students develop a clear direction in life. A new structure for the SWPD is proposed in section 6.2.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Educators discussed training workshops to develop soft skills to support personal development. At HKIVE, the SWPD will replace the existing system of personal development education from the academic year 2007/2008. The following suggested workshops emerged from educators' comments, course documents and teaching experience:

Table 24: Co-curricular activities / Active Learning Model to be integrated into the SWPD

Attributes from SWPD	Example of co-curricular activities / Active Learning Model in classroom learning
1. Team work	Teambuilding workshop, leadership workshop, mentorship scheme, collaborative learning, project work
2. Career development and work attitude	Workplace Attachment Scheme, company visits, flexible learning
3. Self confidence and EQ	Simulated interviews , EQ Workshop
4. Career and ethics	ICAC Workshop, Book reading scheme, Voluntary work, Action learning
5. Self, family, work and society	Community projects, family education, company visits, task-based learning, cross-border visits
6. Improving learning and performance	Simulated performance appraisal workshops, Supplemental Instruction Programme, competency based learning, learning new skills
7. Communication	Peer Mentorship Programme, group learning, presentation
8. Problem Solving	Process restructuring workshop, workshop on crisis management, managing change workshop, problem-based learning
9. Life Balance	Networking workshop, social skills workshop, music appreciation party, Talk on spa / facial / physical exercise / music to release stress, holiday experience sharing

The key concern for educators is the development of the good learning attitudes in students so they proactively facilitate their own learning.

The SWPD is allocated 60 hours (6% of the 1,100 contact hours of a Higher Diploma course). This seems insufficient to deliver the skills that employers require. It is necessary then to develop co-curricular activities that improve personal development, and bolster career development.

From the limited comments of educators (only four discussed this issue) it appears that the structure of the whole-person development programme may be contentious. It will be examined from the standpoint of human resource practitioners later in this chapter.

Learning Attitude

Most educators commented that as long as the programme helps students develop good learning attitudes and thus bolsters quality education, the programme will be successful. Principal Lecturer (Ia5) said ‘once good attitudes are developed, students can be trained to be competent and contribute to the workplace and community.’ Tsang (1999, p.260) argues that good learning attitudes are the key to success at college and the workplace.

Limitations of the present system

Time

Regarding contact time, only 60 hours are allocated to the SWPD. Therefore, certain personal development activities can be integrated into formal learning and informal learning activities and also be considered as alternative ways to support personal development.

Resources

Another constraint relates to resources. The VTC should integrate all co-curricular activities into the curriculum instead of relying the SWPD to deliver soft skills and competency elements. This can be done by encouraging staff to explore different teaching strategies in classroom activities to support personal development. Examples of active learning methodologies are addressed in the literature review and in comments from respondents.

Implementation problems

Implementation problems involve staffing issues such as who is best suited to be in charge of courses, the design of activities and the best ways to record students' learning progress. The proposed SWPD is a compulsory module and the programme will fall under the aegis of the Student Affairs Office. However, one Senior Project Officer commented that the programme and activities should be strongly related to business practice involve departmental staffs who have a strong business acumen, rather than the Student Affairs Office. Departmental staffs should be involved in co-curricular activities that deepen knowledge and technical skills.

Programme Structure

The SWPD broadly follows the UK system and should be reviewed before adoption. A quality of life module should be added to encourage awareness of these issues, and motivate students to learn in positive way. This also can inculcate long term thinking, and adds notions of sustainability to the curriculum.

Colleagues' mindset, organisation culture and support

The findings also suggest that colleagues' mindsets and institutional culture have to be changed so competencies are more easily incorporated into the curriculum and co-curricular activities. As suggested, educators can become more like coaches or role models. Lastly, full departmental backing is necessary to spur personal development education at HKIVE.

Assessment

The Acting Department Head noted that competencies were difficult to assess, being highly dependent on the staff professional judgments on particular forms of assessment used. Relevant staff and management must be proficient at curriculum design and assessment. Without such professional knowledge, it is difficult to develop assessment as a good two-way tool (involving reflection and feedback).

If educators use active learning strategies to support learning, factors such as class size, module, programme activities, resource availability, contact hours, culture, colleague acceptance and assessment methods are considered carefully. Staff professionalism may also affect students' acceptance of active learning both inside and outside the classroom.

5.5 Analysis of Personal Interviews with Human Resource Practitioners

Introduction

This section focuses on ways to select quality employees and discusses learning strategies from human resource practitioners' perspectives. The analysis comprises three main themes: recruitment and selection, teaching and learning strategies and programme structure and design.

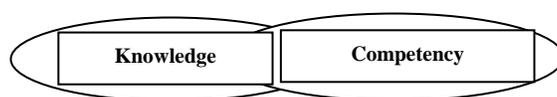
Recruitment and Selection

Selection Criteria

As seen in section 4.5, issues around recruitment were examined. Four respondents noted that recruitment was primarily concerned with appointing people the job requirements: qualifications, and also technical and soft skills. For example, for a technical post such as

accountancy, a professional qualification is the most important criteria. For operational service related posts, the emphasis might be on soft and service-orientated skills. Qualifications and competencies are equally important overall, and students are required to have both to be succeed in the modern job market. From the employers' perspective, the relationship between knowledge and competency is illustrated by the diagram below:

Figure 5: Selection criteria in recruitment



Competency requirements

Competencies (technical skills and general skills) are important. Nijhof and Brandsma (1999, p.31) argue that “within the field of abilities that are directly work related, it is important to promote ‘key areas of competence’ (instead of merely ‘key qualifications’). At the same time, one must have knowledge and skills in particular occupational situations. Besides the training of abilities in the abstract sense, it is equally important to create competence to act, which includes very concrete action (with one’s hands) on real objects. Furthermore, it is not only important to acquire knowledge and skills but to develop creativity and imagination as well.” Therefore, is there a discrepancy between institutional requirements and industry’s requirements? We can compare the competency required at college level (Table 12) and competencies required by industry (Table 18), here:

Table 25: Comparison of the competency requirements for college and at workplace

	Competency required at College Level – Table 12	Competency required in selection process from employers’ perspective – Table 18
1	Communication skills	Communication
2	Managing information	Customer focus
3	Using numbers	Business understanding
4	Creative thinking	Personal effectiveness
5	Problem solving	Creativity
6	Positive attitude	Service mindset
7	Positive behaviours	Working experience
8	Responsibility	Language proficiency
9	Learn continuously	Outgoing and friendly
10	Work safely	Analytical power
11	Work with others	Interpersonal skills
12	Participate in projects and tasks	Good team spirit
13	Interpersonal skills	Knowledge
14	Social skills	Independence
15	Language proficiency	Professionalism
16	Self improvement	Proactivity
17	Time management	Willingness to learn
18	Presentation skills	Networking
19	Survival skills	Leadership
20	Handling stress	Problem solving
21	Implementing change	Negotiation

Through detailed examination of table above, we can see that only six competencies are in common: communication skills, creativity, language proficiency, interpersonal skills, team

spirit, willingness to learn and problem solving. Certain results are in line with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Annual Survey Report in Learning and Development (2007, p.3) where communication, people management and team skills were considered key competencies. The results are also in line with the student survey: communication, problem solving and language proficiency emerged as the top three competences (section 5.3, table 22). Overall, these findings suggest that there is a big discrepancy between requirements demanded by educational institutions and industry. Competency levels at college are not exactly in line with what employers expect except the six common competencies addressed above. Educational institutions should review their programmes to narrow this gap.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Based on the findings presented in 4.5 (Training and Development), several teaching, training and learning strategies were explored and discussed.

Training strategies

HR practitioners suggested that students should identify their own learning needs, and set their own goals in personal development. In addition, it was also noted that no single training method can deliver all competencies. Educators need to tailor different training model to particular skill sets.

Type of training workshops

As discussed in section 5.5 (Recruitment and Selection), employers need to recruit right person for the job, from a quality pool of candidates. The college therefore needs to tailor courses to cater for this modern job market. Workshops can be organised around two

different aspects: technical workshops to reinforce knowledge and technical skills and general skills workshop to enhance soft skills emphasised by employers in recruitment procedures. As the educators in this study suggest, departments should tailor technical workshop to students' particular interests within their study. General workshops focusing on business ethics, communication skills and service delivery can be delivered by Student Affairs Office. Students' learning records can be administered by the college and these files could be passed to students upon request.

Teaching strategies

Teaching strategies were also explored in this study. In Section 4.5 (Teaching and Learning), the use of role-play, project work, task-based and self learning are suggested by human resource practitioners. This involves the idea of integrating active learning methods in a classroom setting. Employers also commented that there should be no fixed formula; teaching and assessment methods should be flexible. Staff professionalism is key in both the learning process and assessment.

Learning strategies

Proactive self-learning was emphasised by a Personnel Strategy and Relations Manager from a large airline (Iep 5). This learning tool was also suggested by a Human Capital Management Officer (Iep4) who believed that students should devise, with staff, their own self-development plans, reflecting learned skills and also their self-assessed needs. Each activity should have a main theme and clear goals tied with skills. The person-in-charge can recommend certain activities for students to choose if needed. This learning method forms a vital part of building skills needed in the job market. Performance indicators should be set

for tasks and behaviour indicators set too. This should be a clear, transparent process from the outset so students are fully aware of the requirements. Competency and attitudes are improved gradually through participating in co-curricular activities.

Programme Structure and Design

Programme structure

Human resource practitioners generally agree with the structure outlined in section 4.3 (Developmental Training Needs). An additional suggestion could be that one regular departmental staff should be assigned to co-ordinate the programme with the Student Affairs Office to provide new input to technical workshops and reinforce the technical training side emphasised by employers.

Programme design

Regarding programme design, employers suggested that student-directed programmes are attractive to students. They believe that a needs survey to help student to conduct a self-assessment of their needs, strength and weakness could also be devised, improving reflective skills and creative thinking. As a vocational training provider, VTC should provide different types of training to precisely fit knowledge and skills needed for either a post requiring qualifications or service-oriented post. Employers are looking for high levels of competency in quality recruits. Co-curricular activities should be relevant to particular professional requirements and the job market. Students should understand that learning (knowledge), training for particular careers (competency), and achievements (outcomes) come about through active participation.

Human resource practitioners emphasised that no single training method was appropriate to inculcate all competencies. The college needs to explore many more informal learning opportunities such as self-learning, group learning or other networking activities to support personal development. Informal learning is vital in the development of self-learning and self-development, and can challenge and stimulate. Furthermore, staff should help learners to develop good learning attitudes, and nurture independence and proactive learning. Once a good attitude has been developed, students can learn from peers, friends and family. The process becomes natural and reinforcing. Skills need to broaden to include interpersonal and social skills, creative thinking, flexibility and communication skills – all essential for successful, rounded people.

Programme recognition

The issue of the recognition of the programme was discussed by employers. Most viewed the formal presentation of a certificate to recognise students' achievement as one workable solution. However, whilst the structure of the programme was a matter of debate, all agreed that a good learning attitude is the key basis of successful learning. Therefore, educators must meet the challenge to develop relevant teaching techniques and assessment methods that encourage good learning attitudes and behaviours from an early stage. If good lifelong learning skills, attitudes and 'habits' are developed at an early age, then successful training, educational and employment outcomes in later years are far more likely.

5.6 Summary

Data collected from documents, students, educators and human resources practitioners was analysed. Survey findings were verified by educators and human resource practitioners and

qualitative data was counterchecked by respondents so as to ensure validity and credibility of the data.

Documents

Three modules and one activity within personal development were examined including Integrated Studies, Creativity, Action and Services, the Final Year Project and the Student Attachment Programme. Different teaching strategies were used in each module/activity and the effectiveness of each module/activity was also examined. All these used 100% continuous assessment to assess students' learning performance except the Student Attachment Programme which was not formally assessed. After investigation, it was discovered that not enough time was allocated by these courses to deliver all the competencies required, and therefore the existing programme was reviewed to explore new learning opportunities for students.

Students

The findings indicate that students were not satisfied with personal development education, although, at the same time, students are aware of their needs and the demands of the workplace. Students explored new active teaching and training methods. Students also suggested future shape of the PDP and agreed to develop the PDP at the HKIVE as part of personal development. Findings also indicate that many students do not have an aspiration in life, and that life balance and quality of life education should be integrated into the SWPD programme to develop awareness of broader life issues. The structure of the programme was also explored: a one year programme was suggested, incorporating workshops and certificates were preferred to recognise students' learning and achievement.

Educators

Most educators agreed on the need to review the existing personal development system. Respondents stated that the existing system was too general and not focused on students' personal needs. Furthermore, not all competencies are integrated into the existing curriculum and co-curricular activities could form a vital part of learning to enhance learners' skills through active participation. The Structured of Whole Person Development Programme was recognised as one way to support personal development opportunities at HKIVE. Lastly, educators provided an important insight on competency-based training and student assessment in the form of portfolios, peer group evaluation and external evaluation to help students to develop the right attitude to learning. It was concluded that if good attitudes were developed, students can become effective and successful lifelong learners.

Human Resource Practitioners

Whilst students and educators strongly supported a formal personal development programme, employers argued that structure was not the crucial factor in successful personal development education. They emphasised that there is no single method or 'one size fits all' approach to personal development. The focus should be on developing students learning attitudes, nurturing independence and proactive learning. Educators supported this notion too. Human resource practitioners also noted the added value of self-development through active participation in personal development activities: these are powerful learning techniques.

To sum up, this chapter provides innovative ideas on ways to deliver co-curricular activities, new routes to successful learning and personal development.

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE IN VTC

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the main themes emerging from the different stages of data collection to ascertain the best ways to assist students to identify their needs and facilitate students' personal development at the HKIVE (Tsing Yi). It is presented in three sections: Implications for Personal Development Policy, Implications for Practice – Teaching and Learning Approaches and Implications for Future Development.

6.2 Implications for Personal Development Policy

In order to facilitate students' personal development education at HKIVE (Tsing Yi), personal development policy should emphasize the importance of co-curricular activities. To fulfill these aims, HKIVE must ensure that:

- a) The VTC should be aware of the importance of personal education and should strive to make the programme more flexible to develop different learning styles;
- b) The VTC should strengthen the learning culture by allocating more resources to support student personal development activities;
- c) HKIVE students and staff will become more aware of the importance of personal development provided by the VTC and more generally once clear policies are adopted at the college;

- d) Performance standards should be set for each co-curricular activity so as to define the levels of knowledge and competence required through participation (to be discussed in next section 6.3);
- e) HKIVE educators and co-curricular programme coordinators should be committed to deliver high quality services in a professional manner, and should have specialise in curriculum design and assessment methods;
- f) Students should be encouraged to monitor, review and evaluate their learning process for themselves from time to time and measure their improvement in skills and knowledge through a concurrent review by programme coordinators;
- g) The VTC and staffs should explore more learning opportunities for their students, and not just those that exclusively apply to the SWPD programme. Many approaches and methods have wider applications in the formal curriculum and informal learning opportunities;
- h) The VTC should recognise students' learning experiences as long as they match with the Personal Competency Model (PCM) and professional standards for learners (to be discussed in section 6.3.3).

In order to implement this policy at HKIVE, the VTC should consider the following:

Programme Structure

Participants in this study suggest the structure should have the following features:

- Be a one year programme to deliver personal education
- Be related to personal needs and career goals

- Be designed to be orientated towards professions and the job market
- Include proactive informal learning should also be recognised and integrated
- An annual theme should be designed and reviewed yearly reflecting economic trends
- Books / activities should be recommended through WebCT and notice board

Corporate Culture

A culture that recognises skills developed using co-curricular activities and self-learning should be nurtured. Students should submit evidence of knowledge and skills and demonstrate good learning attitudes, before certificates are granted by the VTC. Educators should put greater emphasis on co-curricular activities and recognise learning outcomes gained from extra-curricular activities.

Role of Senior Management

The personal development programme would not be a success without full support from senior management in terms of funding and departmental support. Staff involved in organising extra-curricular activities should be counted as regular staff. Proper funding should be allocated to the programme and time-off granted if activities are organised regularly during outside office hours. These changes may attract more staff to organise extra-curricular activities in non-office hours.

Continuous Review of Competency Inventory

Continuous review of competency is required. The study findings suggest that there is a discrepancy between the skill sets required by the college and those required by the job

market. An ongoing review should be undertaken to minimise this gap between the requirements of education and the workplace. This will provide valuable insights to enable educators to clearly define skills and competency standards for each co-curricular activity in line with the real employment market.

Quality of Staffing

The staff in charge of the personal development programme should be professional educators capable of designing models, training modules and assessment tools. It takes time and needs specific skills to conduct review meetings with students to provide frequent feedback to reinforce students' self-identity and identify personal strengths. According to Sumerall, Lopez and Oehlert (2000, p.5), "expertise is an important condition of setting competencies. Competencies should be derived from established persons in the field who are aware of change and can review competencies within a context of change". In addition, there is substantial evidence that students view their educators as role models. The VTC should assign a human resource professional with a good network to design modules and assessment tools in a professional manner.

Good educators should have the following qualities:

- Be leaders, but never boss around unduly
- Have strong professionalism
- Use a humanistic approach
- Emphasise quality work
- Be involved in concurrent evaluation

Leadership

People can be motivated from the outside. Educators should have leadership skills to inspire students to learn voluntarily. The use of force or punishment is not appropriate to make students listen, hence personal power or coercive authority should not predominate. Therefore, operational teaching staff should build up appropriate leadership skills to enhance teaching and learning and develop effective co-curricular activities. This takes time to achieve. However, through trial and error and with positive attitudes, leadership skills can be developed.

Professionalism

Teaching and learning packages are normally developed for formal courses such as the subjects discussed in section 4.2, and there is an urgent need to develop co-curricular teaching and learning solutions to enhance student competencies. The delivery technique should inspire students to participate and enjoy extra-curricular activities and achieve their goals. Informal feedback can be discussed and reflected upon, so improvements can be made.

Humanistic approach

A simple and effective way to strengthen student-teacher relationships is communication between students and teachers and in and outside classroom in an informal, casual manner. Friendliness, good humour and honest, heartfelt discussion is important to build up good communication channels. Positive feedback should be provided in three different ways as suggested by McNamara (1999, p.18):

a) Non verbal reinforcement

- Eye contact and ‘friendly’ expressions
- Standing close to pupil, nodding while scrutinising work
- ‘Thumbs up’ sign or other signal
- A variety of facial expressions which are open, non-threatening and friendly

b) Verbal reinforcement

- Single word comments, received as praise by the students, such as ‘spot on’, ‘great’, ‘excellent’, ‘correct’, or ‘right’.
- Sentences noting that good behaviours that are recognised and encouraged
- Personalised positive comments
- Conversation with a pupil about non-work related matters
- Inquiring if help is required, or offers of help, delivered in a pleasant tone of voice
- Calling on pupils in class by using positive descriptive phrases

c) Written reinforcement

- Positive, personalised comments in exercise books
- Regular letters home or comments in homework diary noting good school work or behaviour

Quality Work

A good co-curricular activity plan with a suitable personal competency model, performance standard and assessment scheme should be designed for each activity. Educators should emphasise that students participating in co-curricular activities can boost their skills.

Performance criteria and behaviour indicators need to be set and linked clearly to the needs of a particular industry (to be discussed in section 6.3, A Practical Example). By doing so, students understand that their achievement is directly relevant to professions and the workplace.

Concurrent Evaluation

Just like departments undertaking self-assessment, educators have to use self-assessment to identify room for improvement, including delivery method and assessment issues. Self-assessment and reflection are crucial tools for good educators, especially for those in charge of co-curricula activities. Concurrent evaluation facilitates progressive improvement and therefore excellence.

To conclude, the whole-person development programme should be lead by good listeners, communicators, curriculum planners and assessors, and those who are able to design and review education frameworks. Leadership should be about inspiring students, being good role models, and leading by example. All the approaches suggested above can enhance students' learning outcomes and promote constructive feedback. By doing so, educators can help students develop positive attitudes to learning and achieve their personal goals.

Assessment Strategy for Co-curricula Activities

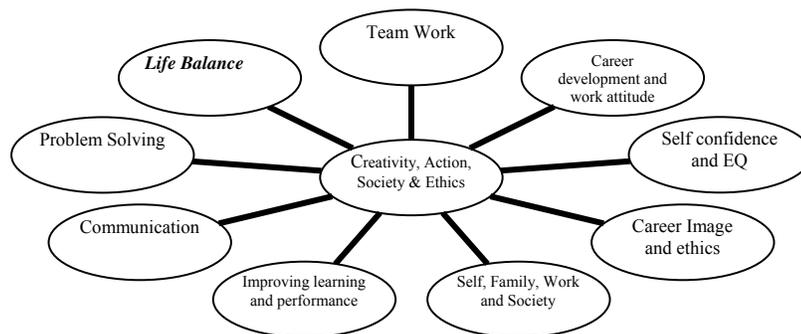
Assessment of the learning outcomes of co-curricular activities is contentious. The possibility that assessment serves a formative, summative or normative purpose depends on resource availability and staff professionalism. In addition, students need continuous support

and constructive feedback during the learning process. Therefore, students must plan and track the learning process. This study discusses how learners can build up their own portfolio, fill out needs surveys, develop a personal learning plan at the beginning of co-curricular activities and a reflective journal at the end of the programme. Students should reflect upon learning outcomes at the end of the activity, enabling them to assess what they have learnt through participation. Assessment methods include self-assessment, peer-assessment and external experts who can provide professional review or assessment of student performance. Co-curricular activities in HKIVE are explored further in next section 6.3.

SWPD: Review and Improvement

As indicated by the survey research, a large minority of students have an aspiration in life. The VTC is encouraged to develop a series of quality of life courses to increase awareness in this area and provide inspiration. Quality of life education should be integrated into the Structured Whole Person Development Programme and the following diagram illustrates my proposed new structure of the SWPD:

Figure 6: The Restructured Whole Person Development Programme (RWPD)



HKIVE is advised to conduct an on-going review of the programme to develop life balance education further. Based on Seddon's Business and Lifestyle programme (2002), the following modules can be developed to enrich life balance education:

- Personal Learning Plan: Plan the right way to achieve goals
- Healthy Exercise: The way to stay healthy
- Leisure: Putting fun in your life
- Music appreciation: Music in life
- Stress and Grief: Relieve stress right away
- Negotiation: The right time to say 'No'
- Work-life balance: Achieving the right balance to enjoy life
- Beauty concept: The way to look more beautiful
- Sleep: Getting good sleep
- Nutrition: Healthy people treasure their life
- Relationship: Harmony in life, your partner and your family
- Social network: Social capital and social support

To sum up, personal development policy should be further developed to encourage awareness and acceptance of co-curricular activities as alternative learning opportunities at HKIVE to develop learners as competent and fully rounded people.

6.3 Implications for Teaching and Learning Approaches and Future Development

Introduction

This section provides a teaching guide, outlining effective co-curricular programme organisation and learning support through informal learning. The active learning model is also discussed. An existing learning support programme, the Supplemental Instruction (SI) Programme, is used as a pilot test. Learning tools including a Personal Needs Survey (PNS), a Personal Competency Model (PCM) and a Personal Development Learning Plan (PDLP) developed for this study. This chapter focuses on three main areas: the Teaching Guide, a practical example and assessment tools.

Teaching Guide

As suggested by human resource practitioners, there is no single method suitable for all competencies. Educators have to think about the suitable training method for a particular co-curricular activity or programme. Different active learning models can be adopted, already discussed in the literature review and analysis sections. Applicable models, derived from this study, include action learning, flexible learning, collaborative learning, project work and competency based learning. Which is the most appropriate one to use depends on the type of activities organised. The following questions are guidelines at the planning stage:

What are students' current needs (personal, financial, psychosocial, and career)?

What kind of existing programme (or modules, activity) do colleges offer to students?

What alternative activities can we offer if we can't satisfy the students' needs?

What kind of active learning model should be adopted?

How can students be helped to reflect upon what they learn?

How can students be encouraged to learn independently and through peers?

Where can the programme to take place?

Who will be in charge of the programme and who will assess students' performance?

Educators have to consider all the questions listed above - especially those pertaining to the availability of human and physical resources. Educators need to select active learning that is most relevant to the particular unit, course, activity or programme. Stern and Huber (1997, p.19) argue that 'in more active forms of learning, learners make their own time plan, they choose learning goals and activities they like, they test their progress, they take care of learning and understanding on their own, and they reflect on errors and successes.' Educators may select a unit or activity by applying the active learning model. Then learning goals should be formulated to support self-development and behaviours encouraged to develop good learning attitudes. Students should be aware of the learning requirements of each activity. Particular active learning model have different advantages and educators should make a professional judgment as to which one is the most appropriate for that particular scenario.

Curriculum plan

In curriculum design, concepts, knowledge, skills, attitude and self-development should be integrated into each co-curricular activity. As suggested by Best (1996, p.12), the needs of the students can be seen as opportunities to learn new concepts, facts, practice skills and develop better attitudes. In order to identify students' needs, educators should conduct a

needs survey to determine the most appropriate project, task or activity to use. The following is an example curriculum design:

Table 26: Curriculum design (for co-curricular activities)

Suggestions	
Curriculum Design	
Programme Title (Level)	Informal Learning Programme (for Year Two or Level Three students)
Theme for the programme	To be a good coach to motivate learners' to learn effectively
Hours involved	Ten hours face to face consultation and ten hours informal communication through different mode
Programme aims	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To help students become effective learners by enhancing their learning skills and spurring motivation and interest in their studies. 2. To increase students' psychological health through personal support. 3. To develop a learning culture where student learn and grow together.
Applicable active learning models	Collaborative learning and action learning
Assessments Tools	Portfolio, reflective journal and personal development learning plan
Co-curricular Learning Outcomes	Leadership skills and coaching skills
Applicable professions	Social worker; Teacher; Counselor; Trainer

Learning Tools

When planning a programme, it is important to understand students' needs. A Personal Needs Survey (PNS) can be conducted. Stern and Huber (1997, p.75) notes that "helping students become aware of their own role and possibilities in the learning process is the first step to increase students' responsibility and a way to reduce students' frustration." Through such a survey, students gain a deeper understanding of their needs, goals and take greater

responsibility for their learning. Our target group - young people in their early twenties - may have a range of needs and concerns involving personal issues, finance or career development. The researcher has eight years experience serving this group of people. The student survey form (Personal Needs Survey in Appendix F) is designed as follows:

Part I: Personal background

Part II: Personal needs analysis

Part III: Personal strength and weakness analysis

Part IV: Personal schedule

Part I to III is designed to identify students' needs, strength and weakness. Part IV is completed by the advisor or educator after discussion with students and provides a suggested personal development plan. Once students understand their goals, they will put in extra effort to complete the programme. As a result, concepts, knowledge, skills and a good learning attitude will then bolster personal development. The needs survey can form the basis of a suitable programme design. Furthermore, the Personal Competency Model (section 5.4, Table 23) and Personal Development Learning Plan (Appendix G) were discussed in section 2.3 (Development of generic skills) and section 2.6 (CIPD) respectively, can both be adopted as learning tools to support the development of competencies and leaning attitudes, through participatory co-curricular activities.

These instruments were developed to help students to identify their personal needs, strength and weaknesses; to develop personal goals and assist students to identify their competencies.

Active Learning Strategies

Three strategies were suggested by informants. Firstly, personal development education can be delivered in a structured format such as the SWPD. Secondly, as discussed by students and employers, formal training workshops can inculcate specific competencies relevant to the market. Thirdly, whilst employers note there is no single training strategy suitable for all aims, a general theme does emerge: the most powerful learning method is proactive self-development, as suggested by educators and employers. Teaching and learning strategies should focus on self-initiated activity, self-monitoring and self-evaluation. Students should take personal responsibility for learning and develop positive, optimistic attitudes. Feedback, reinforcement and action are also important components (Barnes 1999, p.3).

Other active learning strategies can be used. Stern and Huber state that:

Active learning can be more attractive for learners than more passive forms of learning because they can become more motivated and interested when they have a say in their own learning and when their mental activity is challenged. Being involved in the decision about learning they can connect to their prior knowledge and their own needs and interests. In finding out things independently, they can follow their own interests and motivation. In the process they can learn to make decisions and take responsibility. Moreover, active learning is important because of opportunities for learning to learn. Students can learn how to learn by practicing how to do it. Giving them responsibilities for parts of the decisions that can or should be made is one way to teach them how to learn. (Stern and Huber 1997, p.21)

Furthermore, active learning strategies were also addressed in the commission paper of 2000: a holistic review of the education system was proposed, one that emphasises the theme of 'learning to learn'. The Education Commission paper states:

Education reforms aims at providing schools with a quality curriculum, and proposing strategies to help students to build up their capabilities to learn independently (e.g. creative and critical thinking, mastering information technology, communication), to become self-reflective on how they learn, and to be able to use different ways of learning. They will then have the opportunities for developing diverse ways of learning in accordance with their interests, needs and abilities, in order to achieve the aims of education. (Curriculum Development Council 2000, p.3)

To conclude, the active learning models introduced in this study (including project work, collaborative learning, action learning, and flexible learning) all enhance intuitive, proactive, creative learning. Learning environment should fully supported by peers and co-curricular advisors. Groups of students can share learning experiences and review progress. Active learning models can be adopted in stimulating and attractive co-curricular activities.

Assessment Tools

As noted by Silberman (1990, p.8), "training makes sense when some form of assessment is necessary to help to determine the training content". To identify how well students perform in personal development activity, training workshops focusing on certain skills and competencies should be designed. In addition, appropriate assessment tools (as addressed in

section 2.9) can be used to track students' learning progress. Appropriate competency assessment methods and co-curricular activities can spur learning. For example, portfolios can develop presentation and reflective skills, record keeping and proactive learning.

A Practical Example

The Supplemental Instruction (SI) programme improves learning using the input of senior students. Students participate as 'leaders' (to familiarise them with the consultancy profession) or as 'members' (to develop learning ability). Students form groups of four or five, each lead by a senior student. Formal and informal learning methods are used in SI. Formal training workshops are organised that leaders develop reflective learning and coaching skills prior to their appointment as leaders. Then, two to four members are assigned to a leader who provides counselling services to these members throughout a whole term, in and out the classroom. Leaders promote competency and members focus on ways to learn effectively. All participants learn through reflection and concurrent evaluation. Programme coordinators meet with leaders every term or when needed to give constructive feedback. Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993) outline that:

Three key factors in reflecting on experience. The first was a return to the experience, in which the learner recalled the experience, in a descriptive way as it had apparently occurred, without judgement or evaluation. The second was to attend to feelings that arose out of the return to the experience. Obstructive feelings needed to be worked with so that reflection could take place constructively, and supportive feelings needed to be fostered to assist the process of reflection. The third factor was the re-evaluation of the

experience, in which learners linked with this experience elements from their past experience (association), integrated this new experience with existing learning (integration), tested it in some way (validation) and made it their own (appropriation).

(Boud, Cohen and Walker 1993, p.75)

Educators need to develop methods that enable learning through reflection and self-learning to form a vital part of personal development education at HKIVE.

The Chartered Management Institute Personal Competency Model (PCM) (see section 5.4, Table 23) is adopted in the SI programme. Participants use the PCM to identify and develop relevant behaviours and skills. Trainers or advisors design relevant co-curricular activities to focus on individual achievement and adopt criterion-referenced setting. Cotton argues:

In criterion-referenced testing, each individual is measured against a set of agreed standards, independent of other learners. There are strengths and weakness in the trend towards using achievement as a measure of learning. On the plus side, learners have a very clear picture of what they are able to do, so that positive strengths are quickly incorporated in the learner's self-image and may well increase individual self-esteem and motivation. Such constructive reassurance is helpful to the individual's pursuit of wisdom.

(Cotton 1995, p.142)

SI leaders and members use nine or three competency units respectively, to identify key behaviours and skills, as outlined below:

Table 27: The Personal Competency Model for the Supplemental Instruction Programme

<i>Competency for SI Leader</i>	<i>Behaviours Indicators</i>
1. Act assertively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take a leading role in a consultancy sessions with an SI member (at least 1 hour per week). - Take personal responsibility for consultations
2. Behave ethically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comply with college regulations and arrange consultation to take place in the college or library
3. Building good teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leader form as pairs to support others - Build good relationships between leaders and members - Make time to serve SI members regularly
4. Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen actively and clarify points so as enhance members' understanding of the subject - Identify the needs of members - Present ideas to members - Confirm members' understanding through questioning
5. Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify students' learning difficulty and help them solve it
6. Influence Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be positive about knowledge and prepare good presentation strategies
7. Reflective Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accept feedback from peers and members - Take initiative to complete personal journal and personal development plan demonstrating effort and competency - Submit portfolio to demonstrate that achievements and hours contributed - Monitor the consultation against personal development plans
8. Change Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuously improve the counseling strategy
9. Focus on results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lead the members to achieve a pass in final exam - Help all to appreciate the importance of the certificate awarded upon successful completion of the programme

<i>Competency for SI Members</i>	<i>Behaviours Indicators</i>
1. Self Management	- Attend consultation session with leader for at least 1 hour per week - Do revision and think about questions to be asked during the consultation session
2. Communication	- Ask questions to clarify understanding
3. Study Skills	- Improve study skills to be an effective learner

As well as the Personal Competency Model (PCM), educators should also clearly express professional standards/competencies to be enhanced in line with the VTC employability skills (VTC, 2006c) outlined below:

Basic People Skills equivalent to VTC Fundamental skills

- Students can communicate effectively to share ideas and views with others
- Adopt suitable communication channels

People Management and Development equivalent to VTC Personal skills

- Recognise personal and other people's good effort
- Be responsible – set goals and achieve them
- Be adaptable – learn from feedback
- Study safely at the College

Leadership and Management equivalent to VTC Teamwork skills

- Learn continuously, plan and achieve learning goals together
- Be flexible and open

- Respect people ideas and contribution in this learning programme
- Share past learning experience and information
- Manage and resolve conflict
- Monitor the learning process and identify the possible areas to improve

The SI programme provides SI leaders the opportunity to build skills, lead a discussion and develop more active involvement, with resources provided by advisors, including relevant exercises such as business accounting quizzes and economics and business analysis to help SI members learn effectively. Regarding assessment, the following methods are used in personal development (especially in the SI programme) as follows:

(1) Self-reflective journal

Educators establish competency and behaviour indicators for each activity. Students assess themselves on the basis of these. A self-reflective journal can be used to the record tasks completed, and reflect on achievements in a systematic way. The following format is referenced from activity suggested by Elearn Ltd (2005, p.17) to be adopted in co-curricula activities as follows:

Date	The experience/ work done:	What you have learnt from experience:	What you will do as a result of the experience:	When you will review this:
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A self-reflective journal can be submitted at the end of the programme.

Feedbacks from students

As well as self-reflective journals, students need to undertake self-assessment and adopt positive learning attitudes. A leader in the Supplemental Instruction programme commented:

In the first few SI lesson, a student asked me to explain the lecture notes for her and did not really understand what the lecture was about. However, when time was tight as testing and examinations approached, the student became more active and concentrated on her homework. She started to understand the lecture notes herself before attending the SI lesson. As we became friends through the SI program, she asked me questions when she had difficulties. She learnt more about business accounting and was more prepared for the test and exam. (SI Leader 2007, SI programme)

Positive comments by leaders and other findings indicate that both leaders and members in the SI programme were learning and growing at the same time. Leaders and members were become active learners gradually through participation in this programme. This is an effective learning model (involving collaborative and action leaning) for this support programme. With a positive learning attitude, student can become self disciplined and determined to face future challenges.

(2) Personal Development Learning Plan

Students need to record progress in the Personal Development Learning Plan (PDLP) around the issues of reflecting back (what they have learnt), sharing experience (sharing knowledge and ideas), future career prospects (application of skills) and a Planned Personal

Outcome Schedule (competencies and skills) (Appendix G). The plan is adapted from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development plan. It can be used as an assessment tool to record learners' skills and knowledge developed through participatory co-curricular activities, and also can help shape the programme for the next academic year. Students are seen as forward-looking, self-motivated people capable of change and progress and with the ability to assess their performance personally.

The Personal Learning Development Plan (PLDP) is summarised as follows:

Part 1 Reflecting Back

Q1. What do you consider are the most important things that you learned in the SI programme? Please describe how you learned them.

Q2. Please summaries the value you've added to the VTC / HKIVE /students over the term through your personal development.

Q.3 What have been the tangible outcomes of your development over the term through participating in the programme and what aspects of your attitude have changed as a result?

Q.4 Who else has gained from your personal development and how?

Part 2 Sharing Experience

Please provide constructive comments about and photos of your experiences of the Supplemental Instruction Programme.

Part 3 Future career

Q.1 How do you identify your learning and personal development needs?

Q.2 What are skills you would like to enhance in the next 12 months and how will you achieve these?

Q.3 What are the things you plan in the foreseeable future?

Q.4 When will you next review your personal needs and competency profile?

Part 4 Planning Personal Outcome Schedule

Q.1 What do you want to achieve after completion of the programme?

A Personal Development Learning Plan (PDLP) for the Supplemental Instruction programme is contained in Appendix G, provided with the full consent of participants.

(3) Portfolios

Portfolios should be submitted at the end of programme. Students create portfolios to illustrate skills acquired and enhanced through the learning process. Students' strength and weakness are identified through self-reflection. Advisers provide support or guidance when appropriate. As suggested by Cobia and Henderson (2003, p.19), portfolio components can be adapted and include the following elements:

- a) Prepare a reflective statement describing the motivation to join the co-curricular activity. Include a summary of interpersonal and intrapersonal strengths that enhance personal competency and development. Also, identify any limiting factors and describe how they will be overcome.
- b) Reflect on and identify personal beliefs about the purposes of education. Describe the necessary action to take to achieve goals.

c) Reflect on how the skills learned through this programme can be applied in wider life.

These portfolios are used to assess the student competencies and learning progress. The use of portfolios helps develop a more flexible approach to assignment work. Portfolios can be used to demonstrate student knowledge or understanding, and also help them focus on goals. By reviewing the portfolio regularly, both teachers and students can evaluate progress and direction, and set new goals and objectives (Crackett 1998, p.9).

To sum up, this study discusses learning through co-curricular activities, appropriate assessment methods, programme design, and the integration of a competency based approach and active learning into co-curricular activities. As the study indicates, learning can take place outside formal courses, and therefore participatory co-curricular activities represent good learning opportunities. Active learning can maximize learners' learning experiences through peer support, learning sets, needs surveys, personal learning development plans, portfolios and self-reflective journals. This study is worthy of further examination by the VTC or post-secondary colleges to explore the integration of personal development in informal teaching and the curriculum.

Future Development

In this study, various suggestions were explored to support the future development of personal development education at the HKIVE. Key recommendations are as follows:

Flexible Personal Development Programme

To determine a suitable programme, a needs assessment should be conducted to help outline the content of a plan. This also supports the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes through active participation. Once a survey is conducted, performance standards, competency and behaviour indicators should be clear in the programme content. If resources are available, an information platform should be developed to upload relevant information for learners to use by themselves. Learners use this resource flexibly, and at their own pace. Extra-curricular activities and self-development and other personal development activities can be integrated into the formal curriculum. Educators should advise students on choice of courses and elements, and contribute to programme design together. A suitable programme, like the Supplemental Instruction programme, can achieve a dual purpose: training in counseling for leaders, and effective learning for members.

Yearly programme with a main theme

As developed at the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management, a yearly programme with a main theme can be developed. Students register with the programme on a voluntary basis and submit documents that demonstrate their continuous learning at the end of year. These documents include needs surveys, Personal Development Learning Plans, a reflective learning journal and a portfolio.

Active Learning

Action learning, project work, flexible learning and collaborative learning can be integrated in co-curricular activities to support the development of skills through active participation. Competency-based learning can also be integrated into co-curricular curriculum design. The active learning model and competency-based learning are not commonly adopted in the existing system but should be developed in the new personal development system to support the development of social and interpersonal skills and other employability skills.

Students' Awards System

One way to motivate students to participate in co-curricular activities, and encourage achievement, is an awards system involving formal certification in the final year. This kind of recognition is real and reinforces students' motivation and confidence. Competency in the form of performance and behaviour indicators should be acknowledged and documented, and these can be accessed by prospective employers.

External Support

Outside resources are also important to support personal development education. Employers can participate in assessing students' performance and provide feedback on students' competency levels. All records should be kept in students' personal files. If possible, testimonial/reference letters should be issued by employers to recognize students' experiential learning during summer internships. Such extrinsic motivation can encourage student achievement, because an employer's reference is good for future job prospects.

Learning environment

Educators can create a good learning environment to support students intrinsically in their self-esteem, creating expectations to succeed, so students will strive for success at HKIVE.

Learning groups

Group of 4-5 students can help students learn together. These groups develop trust and a good learning atmosphere, and maintain standards, thereby strengthen the learning process.

Learning attitude and the individual

‘People factors’ can affect learning. According to Gerson and Geron (2006, p.40), the following are some of the ‘people factors’ involved:

- Positive attitudes
- High self-esteem and positive self-image
- Communication skills
- Lifelong learning
- Love
- Health and well-being
- Motivation
- Goal setting
- Relaxation
- Visualisation
- Personal value system

Students should develop such positive characteristics, good learning attitudes, perseverance, and motivation. These characteristics of a rounded individual bolster lifelong learning. Lifelong learning augments personal development. It is a virtuous circle.

Competency profile

As addressed in the VTC 8-year strategic plan, attributes of graduates should including knowledge, technical skills and key skills as follows:

- A comprehensive understanding of the subject area
- Strong capability in practical skills
- Key skills include:
- Fundamental skills (communicating, managing information, numeracy, critical thinking, and problem solving)
- Personal management skills (positive attitudes and behaviour, responsibility, adaptability, life-long learning skills, and knowing how to work safely)
- Teamwork skills (working in groups and participating in group projects and tasks)

(VTC 2007d, Teaching and Learning Strategy)

In this study, the findings indicate that specific competencies associated with a particular job must include relevant knowledge, skills (including technical and general skills) and attitude. Attitude is part of personal skills, and may seem obscure to students. Therefore, the VTC should educate students on the importance of personal skill to support lifelong learning.

Positive reinforcement

Often, people want to discuss the negative aspects of others rather than their positive characteristics. However, negativity can demotivate students. Therefore, positive emotions should be reinforced to bolster students' confidence and performance, as suggested by Gerson and Gerson (2006, p.36-37) as follows:

- Joy, happiness, elation
- Achievement motivation
- Approach motivation
- Appreciation
- Relaxation
- Confidence
- Engagement
- Faith
- Pride
- Enthusiasm

Teaching guide for personal development plans

The sample teaching guide in section 6.3 (Implications for Practice) is a suggested rubric for co-curricular activities at HKIVE and includes tools such as the needs survey and personal development learning plan. The needs surveys focus on student needs, strengths and weaknesses, and also can help shape the design of programmes for students. Curriculum design should relate closely to the demands of the employment market and business.

Reflective reports and the Personal Development Learning Plan track progress and demonstrate achievements, as well as being learning tools in themselves.

Assessment Strategy

A range of assessment tools can be adopted: reflective journals, peer evaluation, portfolios, objective tests, presentations, concept mapping and letters home. Educators or assessors select the appropriate assessment methods for each scenario. Competency and behavioural standards should be made clear to students. In particular, reflective methods should be emphasised as this encourages good, proactive learning attitudes and participation. Assessment criteria can be discussed with students so as to reach the mutually agreed criteria. This helps students understand assessment methods and encourages them to put greater effort into achieving good marks.

Staff Professionalism

As addressed in the VTC 8-year strategic plan, the five underpinning core values of teaching staff are as follows:

- Commitment to students and their development
- Knowledge of the subject material they teach
- Commitment to the best teaching practices relevant to their discipline and subject
- Active involvement in professional development (in both academic discipline and teaching practice)
- Active membership of their educational and professional learning communities

As noted in the strategic plan, staff should have the skills to apply the competency-based and active learning models, to implement the best teaching practice relevant to their disciplines and subjects, and also have a clear commitment to co-curricular activities. Positive attitudes in staff are important to students. The findings of this study suggest that co-curricular activities should be treated in a similar way to the formal curriculum with proper planning and assessment guidelines for learners. Educators' professionalism is a crucial factor in the success of co-curricular activities at HKIVE (Tsing Yi). Also, a modular approach can be used in informal learning to form support to personal development, as discussed in section 6.2 and section 6.3.

Modular Approach

Reliance on only SWPD and co-curricular activities is insufficient to fully promote students' rounded development. Co-curricular activities can be integrated in formal modules to offer:

- the provision of achievable, short-term student goals;
- the acknowledgement of previously-ignored student learning experiences;
- a process of integrating a wide range of learning experiences into the curriculum;
- a framework for teacher – student negotiation;
- a way of motivating students;
- a way of organising cross-curricular experiences;
- a process of curriculum change (Arnold and Jones, cited in Warwick 1989, p.215)

Warwick also notes that module work can motivate both student and teacher and give the latter a framework to re-think and redesign the curriculum. Cross-curricular modules can ease the restrictions of a subject-bound timetable.

A main theme should be outlined and units devised that very clearly delineate course content, teaching and assessment methods. If assessment is tied to co-curricular activities, students are encouraged to actively engage in activities to achieve better results. A modular approach here can provide alternative ways of learning for qualifications – which will be fully realised when the VTC formally integrates co-curricular activities into modules to form part of the requirements of a full-time Higher Diploma course.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

According to Lo C.C.R. (2003, p. 283), ‘education is not just to promote students’ cognitive and academic growth, but is also to enhance their emotional and social competence, personal confidence and personal quality and social competency among students.’ We can see personal development pursued both formally and informally in the existing HKIVE system. However, the existing system is also ineffective in delivering all competencies to support personal development. This paper introduces informal teaching and learning approaches to promote personal development, explores other educational settings and structures in Hong Kong and discusses how an informal learning system can be designed to enhance students’ learning attitudes and self-development.

Several conclusions and observations can be made: the added value of participation; the recognition of diverse methods of learning skills; self-development; the importance of structure; and peer support. Furthermore, in the academic sense, we can explore the importance of an active learning model in informal learning, the role of competency evaluation, and further suggestions to help Hong Kong education providers design personal development curricula and plans. Finally, in Section 7.4 (The Way Forward) there is a series of suggestions about how stakeholders can better deliver learning in the future.

7.2 The VTC

The added value of participation

The research shows that extracurricular activities support the development of competency and added value through participation. As discussed in Section 2.3 (Development of attitudes and values), this is linked to self-esteem, a good self-image, reflective skills, independence, integrity and creativity – all vital components of personal development. Personal development is seen as a vital part of becoming a rounded, whole person in later years. Educators note the added value of participatory co-curricular activities within personal development education, and full participation in these activities improves employability skills. Employers back this notion too.

Diverse methods of learning skills

Educators and human resource practitioners agree that active learning methods, including project work, action learning, flexible learning, competency-based learning, collaborative learning and experiential learning enable students to develop more effectively. As human resource practitioners suggest, there is no one single training method ideal for all. Different training methods such as online learning, experiential learning and skill enhancement workshops were proposed. There was agreement that goal-setting motivates students to invest extra effort in learning. Students should be aware of performance indicators and these should be strongly linked to professional and career-oriented skills. Students need to be encouraged to discover their own learning style, engage in co-curricular activities and achieve their goals.

Self Development

As discussed by Murdock and Scutt (see section 2.3, personal development through individual exploration), personal competencies can be achieved through self-development. It is noted that the existing system is rather general and not focused on personal needs. Therefore, one human resource practitioner recommended that the personal development programme should clearly state its goals to become attractive to students and encourage proactive learning. There was a consensus that students should devise their own personal development plans and conduct self-assessment. Raggatt (2000, p.210) states that there is a need for a 'systematic process of taking stock of those attributes that influence one's effectiveness, success, and happiness by conducting self-assessment. Knowing yourself is the first step toward becoming career resilient', and this was something that respondents appeared to universally believe in. As discussed in section 2.3, a 'self-planned learning list' can track the major tasks and personal change achieved (Johns 1996, p.84). It was suggested that such personal development plans should be directed by students and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development framework was identified as a possible model. A 'self-learning plan' for extra-curricular activities was discussed in section 6.3 (A Practical Example).

Structure

The student survey indicates that the current HKIVE personal development programme is ineffective and earns a low satisfaction score. It is also not popular with educators. The SWPD involves only 60 contact hours and does not clearly emphasise the importance of positive learning attitudes. As noted by one respondent, learning is more effective and more

important than training. The precise programme structure may not be of prime importance. Rather, what is crucial is the focus on positive learning attitudes in students so they can develop more independently.

Peer Support

Group learning can form a vital component in supporting the development of skills and good attitude to learning. One senior student can lead four to five junior students in a shared learning experience, and lead by example. Such sharing of real experiences gives valued support to junior students building up a network to support the development of communication and social and personal skills. Self-image and self-esteem are also developed through this group work. This kind of support can form an alternative way of learning, as addressed in section 2.8 (Project-based learning). It is also explored by Thousand (1994) in the concept of Student Team Learning (STL) and in group learning by Button (1974).

7.3 Academic

Introduction

From the research done, there is a clear challenge: how to develop active learning strategies and informal learning activities to help develop fully rounded individuals. Analysis of the findings and implications for personal development education are discussed in section 6.2 (Implications for Personal Development Policy) and in section 6.3 (Implication for Practice). Issues include programme structure, quality of staffing, self-assessment strategies to enhance reflective skills, curriculum plans (developing learning tools), active learning

strategies and co-curricular activities that support students' personal development. The following sub-sections discuss the major academic findings and outline a new learning model for informal learning and competency. In addition, suggestions regarding informal learning systems are also addressed, so that other Hong Kong education providers can then successfully integrate active learning and competency-based assessment into their courses or co-curricular activities.

An Active Learning Model for Informal Learning

This study formulates new teaching and learning strategies for informal learning to support individual development. Through the use of active learning models, students become more proactive, participative, collaborative and flexible in learning. Students develop their own knowledge and career goals through participatory co-curricular activities. Different people have different learning styles. Some like to learn in groups, preferring the increased social contact, whilst others prefer to study alone, thinking things through at their own pace (Elearn Ltd. 2005, p.7). Active learning strategies to develop people should comprise five main components:

1. Teaching strategies

Suitable training and assessment methods for personal development activities should be adopted. Different training strategies such as workshops, guest lectures, cross-border visits, project work, role-plays and online learning (discussed in section 2.3) can be adopted inside and outside classroom learning. In addition, different active learning models can be used to reinforce students' learning experience and help students develop decision making skills in

participatory classroom learning and co-curricular activities. Assessment of students' educational experience should use reflective learning approaches to encourage learners' responsibility and maximise student-educator interaction through regular feedback. Moreover, students' self image can be developed through concurrent self-assessment. Staff professionalism is the key to improve student development and developing the right behaviour through active learning.

2. Personal Development Programme Design and Implementation

Educators can help students identify their personal needs and provide advice on choice of personal development programme. Students should submit their personal needs survey at the beginning of the academic year so as to identify students' needs. A good programme should be designed on a needs basis and can contribute to the success of personal development education at HKIVE.

3. Learning Strategies and Learning Attitude

Students can plan their learning strategy and share their learning experience through active participation and continuous reflection. Student feedback should be encouraged through review meetings once a month. Educators should help students rediscover the joy of learning. Raggatt (2000, p.224), argues that "the joy of learning and the satisfaction of knowing that one is not just a pair of hands and thereby boosting confidence, encourages our students to take up other training opportunities, both vocational and non-vocational."

4. Learning Progress and Implementation

Educators need to develop learning tools to track students' learning paths. Students use a Personal Development Learning Plan (PDLP) to track their learning progress. They can finally submit a portfolio at the end of the year to demonstrate their learning experience and personal learning paths before receiving a certificate from the College. The PDLP is a template of co-curricular activities tailored to each student to further their personal development.

5. Learning Outcomes fit Market Requirements

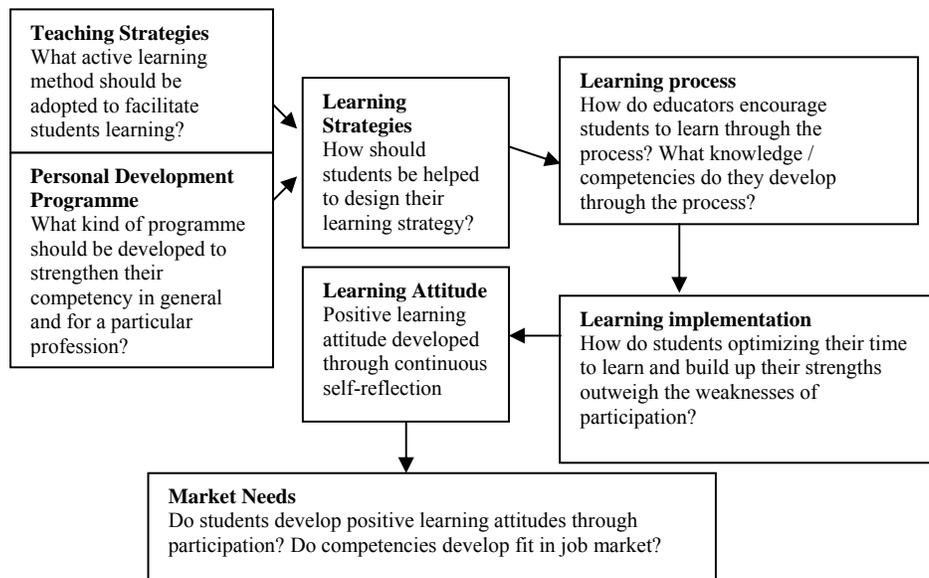
Raggatt (2000) notes that learning is related to the quality of working life, and the idea of partnership in company culture:

The development of workplace education is perceived by the Company as being an essential part of its Partnership culture – the employees “own” the business and therefore have a right to be able to contribute their best to it.

(Baxi Heating 1993, p.71, cited in Raggatt 2000, p.225)

Nijhof and Jiffie (1999, p.11) argue that vocational education should be closely linked to employers, whilst preserving some autonomy. Employers can form partnerships and advise providers on content and programme reviews. The following diagram illustrates the relationship between learning, the personal development programme, and the market:

Figure 7: Modern strategies to develop people



New competencies

Educators and human resource practitioners discussed new components of judging competency: knowledge, skills, learning attitudes and self-development, as follows:

(1) Students' learning attitudes

- With mind and heart
- Learning to learn informally
- Learning to learn using own initiative
- A positive attitude

(2) Students' knowledge and skills

- Knowledge and skills are interrelated and both elements are important in securing good employment
- Skills should comprise of technical skills and soft skills depending on the post

(3) Students' self-development

- Students develop properly if they understand their own learning requirements and have career goals

In this study, attitudes and self-learning are the additional key components in informal learning, and also form a basis to judge competency.

Further Suggestions

As regards the design of a personal development curriculum, and successful informal learning methods, the following are basic suggestions and insights. These ideas should provide good support in the development of rounded individuals:

- Conduct a needs survey first to design a programme to fit learners' needs
- Develop a well structured personal development programme with a main theme in line with professional standards, helping familiarisation with a particular profession
- Identify clearly relevant personal behaviour and skills to be developed and used as illustrated in Table 27

- Ensure professional standards in people skills correspond with employability skills as shown in section 6.3 (A Practical Example). Three level of skills are as follows:
 - Basic people skills equivalent to fundamental skills
 - People management and development equivalent to personal skills
 - Leadership and management equivalent to teamwork skills
- Use assessment tools to keep track of learners' progress to develop learners' reflective skills and proactive learning attitude
- Include collaborative learning structures to encourage students to learn through peers and develop good self-image and self-esteem in groups
- Select correct active learning strategies or activities to reinforce students' awareness of self-development and self-assessment attitudes
- Continuous review of learning materials and active learning exercises throughout the course or programme. Educators can conduct review meetings when needed to understand learners' development of competencies. Use of evaluative rather than descriptive methods as suggested by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
- Look for learning opportunities in class. Lectures can be mixed with active learning activities, learning and self-assessment in groups, and reflective learning approaches
- Look for out-of-class learning opportunities: adopt active learning strategies to augment personal development and recognise students' learning experience as long as students can provide evidence that competencies are enhanced through active participation
- Begin the active learning model at the start of term so that students have time to adapt to self-development learning methods; students can develop their own knowledge using

continuous self-reflection to learn from concrete experiences, as shown in Figure 1:
Kolb and Fry learning cycle

- Try to be flexible, fun and relevant to students' needs. Design training programmes that correspond to different competencies. The learning outcomes of informal learning should be more student-oriented and also in line with professional requirements and the job market

By considering all the suggestions above, educators can be excited by outcomes. Student achievement may exceed expectations; there is more active student involvement in the learning process and students participate in their own learning experiences.

7.4 The Way Forward

Developing positive learning attitudes to continuous learning is crucially important. Learning can take place both formally in class and informally. The stakeholders can enhance learning as follows:

a) The VTC

As a vocational training provider, a positive learning environment and policies should be developed at the college to develop more learning opportunities and broaden students' horizons through experiential learning. College culture should change to embrace the active learning model. In addition, the council should forge partnerships with other organisations such as youth organisations and social enterprises to expand opportunities for students.

b) Employers

Employers can support the education sector through business partnerships and providing placements. In addition, they can have input on student assessment, providing feedback on student learning at the workplace. The feedback can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of co-curricular activities more generally.

c) Educators

Educators should be good curriculum designers. In addition, they should help students to identify needs and personal goals, as evidence indicates students are motivated by goal setting. Students should be positively encouraged to learn intrinsically and good attitudes need to be reinforced. Once students adopt positive attitudes to learning they will strive to achieve their academic and personal goals. However, a balance needs to be struck: over-praising can seem insincere and patronising, whilst absence of praise is discouraging. Gerson and Gerson (2006, p.85) argue that educators should assist students to set goals that play to strengths and talents, provide suitable personal development activities and develop a good learning environment that helps students to achieve their goals. An active learning model can also be applied to develop learning and positive attitudes. Pedler (1991, p.166) argues that the teacher's role is shifting from a 'teacher-expert' role to one of a 'learning facilitator'. Students can make mistakes without it being seen as the 'fault' of the tutor, or seen as loss of control.

d) Learners

To be effective learners, people should develop the ability to learn continuously and understand their strength and weakness through reflection. Learners should take responsibility to learn instead of totally relying on the curriculum provided by the institution. In addition, positive learning attitudes should be developed. Once learners develop positive learning attitude, this opens up broad fields of knowledge and skill sets, and bolsters lifelong learning.

e) Education Manpower Bureau - Qualification Framework (QF)

In 2009, all curricula have to follow the Qualification Framework this includes the Higher Diploma in Business Administration Discipline. Courses focus on certain functional areas to deliver knowledge and technical skills to students. The same teaching and learning approach should be applied to co-curricular activities to formally establish the value of participatory co-curricular activities in personal development.

f) Hong Kong Education Provider

As a Hong Kong education provider, the institute should understand how environmental influences can positively affect students' learning and behaviour. A positive learning environment should be developed during curriculum plan of co-curricular activities. Learning opportunities should be explored that support skills development. A well-structured personal development curriculum guide can reinforce the importance of informal learning as addressed in 7.3. Students should be encouraged to show initiative, participate in co-curricular activities and develop their personal resources in supplemental personal and

social development during term breaks. Workshops can augment the personal development programme, by developing knowledge, skills and good attitudes and reinforcing self-awareness. In doing so, students take responsibility to track their own progress with proper training beforehand.

Active learning strategies are also introduced in this study. They can be applied in both in and outside the classroom. Educators need to use the most appropriate methods for particular units or extra-curricular activities so as to support skills development. The educator should deeply assess and plan the curriculum and assessment before execution.

Last but not the least, the benefits of personal development education are not easily measured purely economically, but are beneficial holistically as Kembers' study (2008) suggests. To devise successful personal development education, suggestions are explored in section 6.4 which are also applicable to other education providers in Hong Kong. These include: flexible personal development programme with main themes; active learning model in learning; a students' award system; external and peer support; learning communities; positive learning attitudes; competency profiles in line with programme aims and profession standards; a culture of positive reinforcement; well-structured curriculum plans and assessment for co-curricular activities; staff professionalism; and finally a modular approach if applicable. In addition, new ideas in section 7.3 include suggestions to get started - useful for other educational settings and structures in Hong Kong and beyond.

To conclude, this study provides new insights into learning. Good knowledge and appropriate skills are important. However, the modern job market demands even more: good attitudes and continuous proactive lifelong learning are now the keys to success. All stakeholders need to support students' personal development - the nurturing of fully rounded individuals.

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APPENDIX
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Item	Page
A. Survey of the College Life, Competency Profile and Developmental Training Needs of Students at HKIVE.....	232
B. The Letter of Invitation for Survey Research.....	238
C. Interview Invitation Letter.....	239
D. Personal Interview Reply Form.....	240
E. Participant Consent Form.....	241
F. Personal Needs Survey (PNS).....	242
G. SI Personal Development Learning Plan (PDLP).....	244

APPENDIX A

Survey of the College Life, Competency Profile and Developmental Training Needs of Students at HKIVE

Dec 2005 / Feb 2006

Name of Student: _____

Course (Yr): _____

Age: _____

Sex: _____

E-mail: _____

Part 1 – Evaluation on the degree of satisfaction of College Life

1.1 Please Tick “√” to indicate your degree of satisfaction about the following aspects of your school life:

1= very strongly unsatisfied

2= strongly unsatisfied

3= unsatisfied

4= satisfied

5= strongly satisfied

6=very strongly satisfied

7= no opinion

	very strongly unsatisfied----->very strongly satisfied						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	No Opinion
a. Relationship with teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Relationship with coursemates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Course content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Teaching methodology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Attitude of teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Attitude of coursemates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Academic achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Employability skills acquisition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Life skills acquisition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Job attachment programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Peer mentorship programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Other activities organized by SAO (please state)_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Other extra-curricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Overall College life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Others (please state)_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX A (Cont.)

1.2 How many hours do you spend on doing revision, social gathering, part time job and other activities every day?

Study/Revision _____ hour(s) Social gathering _____ hour(s)
Part time job _____ hour(s) Sleeping _____ hour(s)
Other activities (please state) _____ hour(s)

1.3 Do you have any other special skills like dancing and singing? Yes () No ()
If so, please do indicate the level/award you achieved?

1.4 Are you a leader of any kind of society? Yes () No ()
If so, please specify the society's name and skills you have enhanced through participating in this society?

1.5 Do you have any problems in College? Yes () No ()
If so, what kind of problems?

- Study problem
- Financial problem
- Difficult to get along with your friends
- Difficult to get along with your family
- Others (please state) _____

Who will be the one you prefer to approach if you need help?

- Classmates
- Personal Tutor
- Year Tutor
- Counsellors
- Parents
- Others (please state) _____

1.6 Do you think that the knowledge and skills you have learned so far from this course can help you in your future personal development? Yes () No ()
If not, please specify the reasons. _____

1.7 What kind of career do you want to develop upon graduation?

1.8 Do you have an aspiration in life?
Yes () please state _____ No ()

APPENDIX A (Cont.)

Part 2 – Students’ perceptions of Key Competency to be acquired at HKIVE.

Please go through the following list of competencies that cover employability skills and life skills required for IVE students. Choose top **TEN (10)** you regard as the most important for those to be acquired throughout the course by putting 1 to 10 in the box against each.

	Your Priority
Fundamental Skills	
1. Communication Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Manage Information	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Use Numbers	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Creative Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Problem Solving	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal Management Skills	
6. Positive Attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Positive Behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Be Responsible	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Learn continuously	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Work Safely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teamwork skills	
11. Work with Others	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Participate in Project and Tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life Skills	
13. Interpersonal Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Social Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Language proficiency	
- Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
- English	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Potonghua	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Self Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Time Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Presentation Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Survival Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Handling Stress	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Implementing change	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.1. Do you believe that our courses can help you to develop the top ‘10’ competency that you have been chosen?

Yes () No () please state which one _____

APPENDIX A (Cont.)

Part 3 – Competency Profile of students

Please do assess yourself how well our course can help you to develop the following competencies at the moment (Current Column) and your expectancy of competencies that should be acquired in the future (Future Column). Use a scale of 1-6 to indicate your own rating of the competency level, where 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = below average, 4 = above average, 5 = high, 6 = very high

Current						Future							
<i>(Very Low)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>(Very High)</i>	<i>(Very Low)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>(Very High)</i>
Fundamental Skills													
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>										
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manage Information	<input type="checkbox"/>										
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use Numbers	<input type="checkbox"/>										
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Creative Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>										
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Problem Solving	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Personal Management Skills													
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive Attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>										
7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive Behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/>										
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Be Responsible	<input type="checkbox"/>										
9.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn continuously	<input type="checkbox"/>										
10.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work Safely	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Teamwork skills													
11.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with Others	<input type="checkbox"/>										
12.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participate in project	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Life Skills													
13.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interpersonal Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>										
14.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>										
15.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Self Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>										
16.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Time Management	<input type="checkbox"/>										
17.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>										
18.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Survival Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>										
19.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Handling Stress	<input type="checkbox"/>										
20.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Implementing change	<input type="checkbox"/>										
21.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Language proficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>										

(Including Chinese, English and Potonghua)

APPENDIX A (Cont.)

Part 4 – Survey on Developmental Training Needs

Please place a “√” in the appropriate box.

4.1 Please indicate whether HKIVE should adopt any of the following methods, approaches or methodologies in training. Please use a scale of 1-6 to indicate your preference in training mode, where 1 = least likely, 2 = unlikely, 3 = marginal unlikely, 4 = marginally likely, 5 = quite likely, 6 = most likely

		Least likely----->most likely						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	no Opinion
a.	Traditional Lecturing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Small group tutoring - seminar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	Self-learning with independent learning pack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Training workshop conducted in summer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.	Action learning through work-related project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f.	Peer learning like participating in Peer Mentorship Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g.	E-learning platform	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h.	Learning support with tutor and buddies like Supplementary Instruction Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i.	Learning support with the same counselor assigned by the department for 4 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j.	Individual tutored learning with the same tutor for 4 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k.	Distance Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l.	Project Learning, like the Entrepreneurship project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m.	Networking activities such as participating in BSM alumni	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.2 What kind of activities needed to be enhanced in the next three years?

- Enhance the existing academic programme in conjunction with university
- Develop new training courses to enhance soft skills
- Professional accreditation
- Provide more cross-border visits
- Offer more workplace attachment opportunities in study
- Offer more company visits to enrich experiential learning
- Invite parents to be mentors
- Provide more exchange programme to participate in
- Others, please specify: _____

APPENDIX A (Cont.)

4.3 If a Personal Development Programme (PDP) was launched in BSM in the foreseeable future, will you support and participate in this programme?

Aims: Identify your learning needs and lead you to grow in the proper way

Agree () Not Agree ()

If you agree to launch PDP, which would be your preference concerning the following arrangements for Personal Development Programme?

A) Type:

Workshop / seminar leading to an attendance certificate

Informal gathering with staff with proper record system

Other (please state _____)

B) Duration:

6 months programme

1 year programme

2 year programme

Other (please state the period _____)

C) Frequency of Meetings:

Once per month

Two times per quarter

Twice a year

Other suggestions (please specify _____)

D) Days of the Week:

During weekdays

During weekends

Other suggestions (please specify _____)

E) Meeting Time:

During school hours

After school hours

Combination of the above

F) Tutor / Person in charge

Academic staffs

Students Affairs Officer

Professional Counsellor assigned by the department

Professional Counsellor assigned by the SAO

Other Institution or Mentor Organisation (please state _____)

4.4 Other comment on launching of Personal Development Programme at HKIVE?

- End of Questionnaire -

Thank you very much for your information, opinions and assistance!

APPENDIX B
The Letter of Invitation for Survey Research

From: Miss Anita SM Leung, BSM/IVE/TY
Subject: Survey Research
Date: Dec 2005

**Survey of the College Life, Competency Profile and
Developmental Training Needs of Students expected to be acquired at IVE**

I am writing to solicit your kind assistance in conducting a questionnaire survey on College Life, Competency Profile and Personal Development Training Needs expected to be acquired at Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Tsing Yi). The survey forms part of my research work to fulfill the requirement of my postgraduate study in School of Education at the University of Nottingham.

The survey aims to assess college life, identify your competency and the personal development training needs for students. This survey will cover BSM/IVE/TY students only. Your support will determine competency profile, what kind of activities needed to be enhanced and system to be developed for students to face future challenges and opportunities as a paraprofessional upon graduation.

I would be grateful if you could spend 20 minutes to complete the attached questionnaire and return it back to me direct. All information collected will be used solely for the research purpose and treated confidentially. No names of personnel will appear or will be identifiable in the final thesis.

You should be aware that you may choose whether to participate in this study. If you do not want to answer a certain question, you may leave the question blank. Should you have any query and/or comment, please feel free to contact me by phone 24368484 or e-mail (asmleung@vtc.edu.hk).

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your time spent in the survey and your help.

Yours sincerely,

Leung Sui Man, Anita
Department of Business and Services Management
Vocational Training Council

APPENDIX C

Interview Invitation Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Doctorate Degree in Education Interview Invitation

I am writing to seek your support in granting an interview which will last for about 40 minutes and will be conducted in June, July or August of 2006. An interview forms part of my research work to fulfill the requirement of my postgraduate study in School of Education at the University of Nottingham.

The aim of the study is to examine the effectiveness of personal development opportunities at Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Tsing Yi). This is intended to explore the possible support to facilitate students' personal development. All the data collected will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for analysis. The interview will be audio taped. No names of personnel will appear or will be identifiable in the final thesis.

You should be aware that you are free to participate in this study. If you do not want to answer a certain question, you may feel free to withdraw from the interview. If you need any clarification, please feel free to contact me by phone 90563450 or e-mail (asmleung@vtc.edu.hk).

Finally, could you please complete and return the attached reply form to me by July 2006? I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your time spent in the interview and your help.

Yours sincerely,

Leung Sui Man, Anita

APPENDIX D

Personal Interview Reply Form

Attn: Leung Sui Man, Anita (BSM/TY)

Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education – Tsing Yi

Department of Business Services and Management

20 Tsing Yi Road

Tsing Yi Island

New Territories

Tel: 90563450 (m)

Fax: 22576855

Interview Reply Form

(A) Details of Interviewee:

Name: _____

Position: _____

Organisation: _____

Job nature: _____

Tel: _____

e-mail: _____

Correspondence Address:

(B) Proposed Date, Time & Venue for Interview:

	Date	Time	Venue
1 st Preference			
2 nd Preference			
3 rd Preference			

-- Thanks for your participation in my research work --

APPENDIX E

Participant Consent Form

Project title: The effectiveness of personal development opportunities at
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Hong Kong)

Researcher's name: Leung Sui Man, Anita

Supervisor's name: Dr Simon McGrath

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that data will be saved on CDROM and retained for three years. All data will be used purely for the purposes of the research project (including dissemination of findings). No-one outside of the research team will have access to any of the data collected.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed

Print name **Date**

Contact details

Researcher: Leung Sui Man, Anita (asmleung@vtc.edu.hk)

Supervisor: Dr. Simon McGrath (Simon.Mcgrath@nottingham.ac.uk)

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: Andrew Hobson
(andrew.hobson@nottingham.ac.uk)

APPENDIX F

Personal Needs Survey (PNS)

Part 1 Personal Background

Q1. How often you plan your personal needs?

- Often Sometimes Never Others _____

Q2. What kind of needs would you want to fulfill yourself shortly?

- Leisure Further Education Getting a good job Financial
Others _____

Q3. In what way how do you satisfy your needs?

Please priorities your needs by putting (1) to (4) into the below:

- Plan a Holiday, please specify the place you want to go _____
- Take a course, please specify the course you interested _____
- Find an agency to get better job, please specify the company you look for _____
- Make loan from banks, please specify the amount you want to ask for _____
- Others _____

Part II Personal Needs Analysis

The following programmes are offering in this academic year and will be available for you to choose. Please select the one you are interested to participate.

Needs	Suggested Programme	Competency	Profession
Plan a Holiday	<input type="checkbox"/> Language Training <input type="checkbox"/> Geographical Understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Leisure	Language Understanding culture and places Handle stress	Trainer Tour Guide Counsellor
Career	<input type="checkbox"/> Interview Technique <input type="checkbox"/> The way to make a good question! <input type="checkbox"/> Answering technique <input type="checkbox"/> Business etiquette	Listening Questioning Answering The way to reply Dress Code	The profession you look for _____
Financial	<input type="checkbox"/> The way to plan you financial properly?	Mathematical reasoning Finance & Accounts	Financial planner

Needs	Suggested Programme	Competency	Profession
Plan to take a course	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication Workshop	Communicate Skills Presentation Skills Language Proficiency Manage Information Use Numbers Analytical Power Think & Solve Problems Working experience	Journalist Public Relation Accountant Financial analyst
	<input type="checkbox"/> How to figure out the right answer?		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Student Attachment Programme	Demonstrate Positive Attitudes & Behaviors Be Responsible Be Adaptable	Applicable for different profession
	<input type="checkbox"/> Supplemental Instruction Programme	Learn Continuously Work Safely Self Improvement Personal effectiveness	Education Training Counselling
	<input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mentorship programme		
	<input type="checkbox"/> The way to empower your thinking!	Creativity Outgoing and friendly Independent Proactive	Designer
	<input type="checkbox"/> The way to form a good Networking.	Networking Social Skills Interpersonal Skills	Sales and Marketing
	<input type="checkbox"/> Customer Services Management	Customer Focus Service mindset	Customer Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Change Management	Implementing Change	Hotel and Catering	
<input type="checkbox"/> Diploma Courses	Business Understanding Knowledge		

Remark: Not enough space to list out all profession in job market, please consult your co-curricular adviser for more details.

Part III Personal Strength and Weakness Analysis

Please list out your strength, weakness below:

Part IV Personal Schedule

To be completed by the co-curricular advisor

Selected Programme	Duration	Cost	Expected Date to complete

APPENDIX G

SI Personal Development Learning Plan (PDLP)

Date: 07/05/07

Time: 11:30 – 12:30 / 5:30 – 6:30

Venue: C352

Person-in-charge: SI Programme co-ordinator

Part 1 Reflecting Back

Q1. What do you consider were the three most important things that you learned in the SI programme? Please described how you learned them?

Personally, I have learned much through this programme, especially, I can review what I had learned. Besides, I found that considering with others and trying to understand what the others need is very important to a leader

Q2. Please summaries the value you've added to the VTC / HKIVE /students over the term through your personal development?

In this SI programme, I can see how my members change, improve and motivate themselves. At the beginning, they were a little bit confused with the subject and some of them might have problems with their time-management. As time passes, things one getting better now. They are willing to ask what they don't understand. To be frank, I'm quite appreciate their positive attitude

Q.3 What have been the tangible outcomes of your development over the term through participating in the programme and what aspects of your attitude have changed as a result?

I really enjoyed this programme, it provided me a great opportunity to practice my communication skill and leadership skill and I enjoyed being with my members too.

Q.4 Who else has gained from your personal development and how?

My SI members through my contribution and let our members achieve a good result in final exam.

APPENDIX G (Cont.) SI Personal Development Learning Plan (PDLP)

Part 2 Happy Experience Sharing

Please provide constructive comments about and photo of your experiences of the Supplemental Instruction Programme.



My SI member (Wong On Wa) and I change the SI place from C325 to library because she has a part time job which starts from 6:00 p.m.
The room C325 opens from 5:30p.m., if we study at the place at that time, Wong On Wa will be late on her job.
However, she and I have time on 4:30 to 5:30p.m. on Wednesday, so I choose that time to study with her at the library. I happy to adapt such change and get comprise the common timeslot with each other.

Part 3 Moving Forward to your future career

Q.1 How do you identify your learning and personal development needs?

Through informal personal review of my skills, knowledge and recent experience gained from the programme set against likely future work – trainer and counselor. Experience gained is so real through reflective report, continuous personal development inventory and discussions with SI leaders and co-ordinators.

Q.2 What are skills you would like to enhance in the next 12 months and how will you achieve these?

I will try to conduct a similar voluntary programme in community as helper role to get more insight to leadership role.

Q.3 What are the things you plan in the foreseeable future?

I will join Students Attachment programme to familiar with real business setting and try to be a part of human resource management team in order to familiar with the way to run a training course.

Q.4 When will you next review your personal needs and competency profile?

Next month in June with the SI team, including members, co-ordinator and leaders.

APPENDIX G (Cont.)
SI Personal Development Learning Plan (PDLP)

Part 4 Planning Personal Outcome Schedule

What do you want to achieve after completion of the programme?

What do I need to learn?	What will I do to achieve this?	What resources should the college provide you?	What will be successful criteria?	Target dates to achieve and the time to review