

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Case Study

University: Hong Kong Baptist University |

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 28 Social Work and Social Policy |

Title of case study: Career and Life Planning for Youth-At-Risk in Community Settings

(1) Summary of the impact

The disengagement of Hong Kong youth-at-risk (aged 15-21) results in their aspirations and achievements being misrecognized and inadequately theorized. Informed by the Expanded Notion of Work (ENOW) model which recognizes both paid and unpaid work experiences, this impact case study focuses upon a community-based partnership seeking to mitigate disengagement outcomes through targeted experiential activities, phased career interventions, and “fit to purpose” workplace learning and counseling. Through the large-scale collaboration and interaction of social workers, employers, and other societal stakeholders, youth-at-risk are achieving greater social engagement and career competencies when making career transition to full-time employment, further education, and/or job training.

(2) Underpinning research

This case study comprises an underlying part of a larger “Career and Life Adventure Planning for Youth” (CLAP) project funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, consisting of a Community-Based Team (CBT) at HKBU and a School-Based Team (SBT) at CUHK. Prof. Victor Wong is the PI of CBT, whose conceptual- and evidence-based ENOW model is being used to address and measure the positive career development of disadvantaged youth considered “not in employment, education or training” (i.e. NEET) or NEET-at-risk. Wong’s ENOW model uses and assesses both paid and unpaid work activities and experiences, such as vocational education and training, modern apprenticeships, job exposure measures, workplace learning, volunteering, domestic/neighborhood provisioning, and serious leisure ([Wong, 2015](#); [Wong & Yip, 2019](#)) for overcoming employment precariousness and promoting youth-at-risk empowerment and career development ([Wong & Au-Yeung, 2019a](#); [2019b](#)). The ENOW model underpins, in turn, the field practice approaches of social workers and youth workers across five CLAP service teams involved in receiving case referrals from schools and NGOs throughout Hong Kong including: students with special educational needs, high-risk school dropouts, ethnic minority youth, young mothers, and youth secluded at home for protracted period of time ([Wong, Yuen, Su & Yung, 2019](#); [Wong & Su, 2019](#)). Throughout Hong Kong, the CBT and five CLAP service teams collaborate with multiple stakeholders (such as industry-based career mentors, NGOs, and employers) so as to implement the “values, attitudes, skills and knowledge” (VASK) evaluative framework applied as a means of strengthening the career competencies and longer-term career roadmaps for Hong Kong youth-at-risk across lifelong vocational, leisure and learning careers.

Specifically, the CBT uses mixed qualitative and quantitative methods to collect field data and evidence from youth clients, practitioners, employers, and other stakeholders. The research tools include socio-demographic questionnaire, pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, case-closing questionnaires, practitioners’ intervention-record inventories, longitudinal case-studies, comparison group studies, and various impact studies using the BACK framework (i.e. behaviors, attitudes, conditions and knowledge). A key aggregate data source has likewise been a functional all-rounded CV-generator template, called CV360, which Prof Wong designed to compile, archive, and illustrate VASK-inventory outcomes. Outcome and impact-study questionnaires are developed (in both online and paper versions) for CV360 so as to measure and assess how work-related experiences, paid and unpaid, transform the life and career opportunities of Hong Kong at-risk youth. Supplementing the collection of data from youth clients and corporate partners, a qualitative study is presently being conducted to correlate the interview data collected

from youth-at-risk, social workers, human resources personnel, and frontline staff at local businesses. A longitudinal case-study (including 20 social workers and more than 100 youth respondents currently in employment, education or training for three months or above) is being conducted to answer in what ways different groups of youth-at-risk ([Wong, Yuen, Su & Jung, 2019](#); [Wong & Su, 2019](#)) could achieve meaningful career progress.

(3) References to the research

- 3.1 Wong, V. (2015). [Youth transitions to work in an age of uncertainty and insecurity: Towards an expanded notion of work for insight and innovation](#), *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, 1(1): 2-41. This is a must read for participants attending CBT/CLAP professional training sessions, including a 2-page discussion of ENOW in White, R., Wyn, J. and Robards, B. (Eds.) (2017). *Youth & Society*, 4th Edition, pp. 222-223. Victoria, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- 3.2 Wong, V. and Yip, C.Y. (2019). [Promoting change: The “expanded notion of work” as a proactive response to the social justice issues in career development practice](#). In Tristram Hooley, Ronald G. Sultana & Rie Thomsen (Eds.) *Career guidance for emancipation: Reclaiming justice for the multitude*, pp. 64-80. New York & London: Routledge. Addressing social justice is now a core concern when delivering and evaluating career guidance and interventions globally.
- 3.3 Wong, V., Yuen, J., Su, X., & Yung, J. (2019). [Social isolation experienced by youth in social withdrawal: Toward an interdisciplinary analysis and practice](#). In *Social isolation – An interdisciplinary view*. IntechOpen. Open access peer-reviewed chapter – ONLINE FIRST. This article analyzes social isolation experienced by youth and the use of interdisciplinary strategies to facilitate their more proactive engagement and career development in community settings.
- 3.4 Wong, V. & Su, X. (2019). [Research on youth career development: A perspective informed by the development of interests and interest-based interventions](#). *Youth Exploration*, 222: 65-77. To reach a wider audience in Greater China region outside HK including China, Taiwan and Macau, this article (in Chinese with an [abstract in English](#)) promotes and documents the uptake of the interest-based ENOW-VASK framework among social workers in HK. In alignment with the ENOW-VASK framework, the analysis focuses upon interventions across three interlocking career pathways: vocational careers, learning careers, and leisure careers.
- 3.5 Wong, V. and Au-Yeung, T.C. (2019a). [Autonomous precarity or precarious autonomy? Dilemmas of young workers in Hong Kong](#), *Economic and Labour Relations Review*. Epub (ahead of print) on 27 March 2019. This article addresses the global dilemma—individual autonomy versus precarious work—facing youth along their career development journey in Hong Kong’s post-industrial economy.
- 3.6 Wong, V. and Au-Yeung, T.C. (2019b). [Expediting youth's entry into employment whilst overlooking precariousness: Flexi-employability and disciplinary activation in Hong Kong](#). *Social Policy & Administration*. 2019; 53:793-809. This article examines employment precariousness confronted by youth in their career transition journey, which has to be thoroughly addressed if the career development of youth-at-risk in particular is to be enhanced.

(4) Details of the impact

Prof Victor Wong (PI) was awarded by HKBU as the only one awardee of the [2018/19 HKBU Knowledge Transfer Award](#) on the basis of verifiable impact achieved by the present impact case study ([refer to 5.1](#)). As at May 2019, impact-beneficiaries were amounted to 8,237 clients with 3,363 cases closed. A large proportion of clients reported enhanced knowledge of career-and-life planning ($n=2,385$, 87.5%), increased ability to identify interests and strengths ($n=2,385$, 87.4%), a clear direction and career roadmap ($n=2,384$, 85.7%), ability to undertake actions realizing career-and-life plans ($n=2,385$, 84.5%), increasing motivation ($n=2,384$, 86.8%), and decreased undesirable/anti-social behaviors ($n=2,378$, 82.0%). After receiving professional services, sampled clients ($n=2,846$) are engaged in employment (32%), education (69%), and/or training (4%) with sustained mean-length of 9.87 months through May 2019. The average monthly salary of employed

clients is HK\$13,633 which exceeds the median wage of HK\$12,300 of youth aged 15-24 as at Q4/2018. The present case study demonstrated statistically significant clientele impact (at the *p*-level of .001 unless otherwise specified), as evidenced by the results of paired sample T-test of pre- and post-intervention scores measured by the following scales/inventories: 1) Career-Adaptability Scale (CAAS) (*n*=1,390) with breakdown in terms of Concern (*n*=1,412), Curiosity (*n*=1,412), Control (*n*=1,390) and Confidence (*n*=1,390); 2) Career Futures Inventory-Revised (CFI-R) (*n*=1,413) with breakdown in terms of occupational awareness (*n*=1,413), career agency (*n*=1,412), support & work-life balance (*n*=1,412); 3) Career Engagement (*n*=1,389); and 4) reduction of Amotivation (*n*=1,412, **p*=.024), Social Interaction Anxiety (*n*=1,374), and Antisocial Attitudes (*n*=1,389, **p*=.011). (refer to slides#2 - #5 of 5.2)

Compared with short-term NEETs (<5 months before intervention, *n*=4,968), long-term NEETs (≥5 months before intervention, *n*=791) experienced significant difference in pre- and post-intervention scores of the inventory of CAAS: $t(136.01) = 4.11^{***}$, *Cohen's d*=.43, and that of CFI-R: $t(139.37) = 3.01^{**}$, *Cohen's d*=.32. Prior to intervention, the short-term NEET group demonstrated statistically significantly higher scores for Career Engagement and lower scores for Amotivation and Social Interaction Anxiety than their longer-term counterparts. Upon case-closing, however, the long-term NEET group effectively surpassed their short-term counterparts across all these assessed categories. (refer to slide#13 of 5.3)

Benchmarking to relevant international studies, time-cost saved in mitigation of NEET status was achieved: 27% less time for all NEET clients served, and 56% less time for other more vulnerable groups. (refer to slide#8 of 5.2)

Additional impact has been achieved through the deployment of professional training packages by all stakeholders. As of May 2019, 1,450 participants completed Level-1 training (15 hours), and 96.6% of all participants were equipped with professional knowledge in delivering career interventions (refer to slide#3 of 5.2). Another 320 participants attended Level-2 training (28 hours) with a corresponding percentage at 95.7% (refer to slide#14 of 5.2). Over 60% of Level-2 respondents (*n*=180) applied ENOW and 73.6% (*n*=182) applied VASK in their work (refer to slides #23 & #24 of 5.2). A Level-1 online package is now being jointly developed by CBT and SBT for promoting capacity-building in support of frontline social workers and other helping professionals to achieve sustainable outcomes beyond 2020.

Additional tools developed for CLAP and central to achieving the longitudinal aims of this impact case study include: CV360, workplace learning, and interest development. User guidelines introducing the concepts of ENOW-VASK, backed by “good practices” and research findings, will be disseminated enabling different professional and community stakeholders to deliver CLAP-informed interventions beyond 2020 (refer to page 24 of 5.4). Four respective reference lists — Values (42 items), Attitudes (34 items), Skills (36 items), and Knowledge (36 items) — have been finalized in advance of the deployment of a brand-new ENOW-VASK career card sort. A public-access [CV360 website](#) disseminating these updated VASK reference lists has been launched. An additional 735 online CV360 valid questionnaires have been collected to date, with a majority of respondents reporting positive outcomes in terms of enhanced self-understanding (86.8%), improved self-confidence of strengths and abilities (84.4%), and planning for career development (87.8%). Online CV360 data was used for individual/multiple purposes including: job applications (65.7%), school/training applications (32.2%), critical self-reflection (28.3%), and archiving individual learning (29.7%). (refer to slide#8 of 5.5)

More than 200 clients were offered a one-stop, “11-step” workplace learning programme (refer to slide#26 of 5.2) conducted within six large-scale corporations. Upon conclusion of these programmes 42 clients were given firm job offers. The implementation of the ENOW-VASK framework onsite provided real-time feedback from employees to employers, who were subsequently better positioned to redefine their job statements in VASK terms and make better hiring decisions and deliver better mentoring outcomes. (refer to 5.6)

(5) Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 [HKBU Knowledge Transfer Award 2018/19](#) was awarded to Prof Victor Wong (PI), upon submission of early-phase elements of the present impact case study. Substantiated by an elaborate theory of change and practice (refer to p.5 of the submission), this award is given to an HKBU-based, KT project judged to have utmost value for community engagement.
- 5.2 Overall research findings (through May 2019) indicate positive career development of NEET or NEET-at-risk youth clients under CLAP intervention, and the strengthening of capacity building of different stakeholders, including social workers and employers supporting the career development of youth in community settings.
- 5.3 Segmenting the differential impact of CLAP intervention on long-term NEETs and short-term NEETs. The former group is characterized by a higher level of vulnerability and a lower starting point across different career aspects, yet also managed to surpass their short-term counterparts upon the conclusion of ENOW-VASK informed interventions.
- 5.4 [A case study on the unique features and impact of CLAP for Youth @ JC project](#) (accessible in both English and Chinese versions) supplemented by [bilingual CLAP Project website materials](#) and resources (framework and concepts, shining programs and cases, videos, and conference presentation slides) available for public access and download.
- 5.5 Designed as an all-rounded resume experience, CV360 is used by online users to showcase individual uniqueness, passion, and strength in terms of VASK. Click onto the following underlined hyperlink for the latest online CV360 user survey findings.
- 5.6 [Three corporate testimonials](#): (1) from Mr Brian Cheng, Chief Operation Officer, **Generation Hong Kong** regarding the “first ever attempt in HK to incorporate the ENOW-VASK framework and CV360 into [its] boot-camp training package tailor-made for IT and hospitality industries job candidates in Hong Kong”; (2) from Mr. Alfred Tse, Associate Director, People and Culture, **ISS Facility Service Limited**, who embraced CV360 in the effort to improve his company’s corporate hiring and training practices.; and (3) from Mr. Sam Chiu, Head of HR and Training, **Pricerite Home Limited**, who recommended the use of CV360 to identify VASK/ENOW parameters when refining the job descriptions and workplace learning goals for each frontline post. On 11 March 2019, Pricerite Home Limited was awarded the 2019 Bronze Medal in the “HSBC Living Business Sustainable Development Goals Award” competition for achieving “Reduced Inequality” aligned to its core mission.
- 5.7 [Podcast \(hosted by Professor Tristram Hooley\) introducing the “DNA of CLAP” to international career academics and practitioners](#). The PI, two CBT colleagues, two colleagues from a DST, and six youth-at-risk clients demonstrated the ENOW-VASK framework as a basis for engaging low-academic achievers and NEETs.
- 5.8 Dr. Jacques Pouyaud, a French scholar, incorporates our case study’s ENOW-VASK framework into his psychosocial approach to decent work. The PI will make a joint research presentation with Dr. Pouyaud in Lausanne, Switzerland in March 2020, and HKBU will be given an opportunity to join the UNESCO’s UNITWIN Network as the only one Asian institutional member of the Network for promoting Life Designing career interventions and research for decent work and sustainable development on a global scale.
- 5.9 [Media reports](#) (in English and Chinese) reporting upon the distinctive features of CLAP in relation to the ENOW model, the combined ENOW-VASK framework, CV360, etc. The Jockey Club briefed members of the Youth Development Commission (chaired by Mr. Cheung Kin-chung, Chief Secretary of the HKSAR Government) on the “CLAP for Youth@JC” Project. “The Commission agreed that government bureaux shall continue to explore potential collaboration with the HKJC to promote best practices on youth life planning.”
- 5.10 [A YouTube video clip](#) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuv7C9yexVo>) was produced to introduce ENOW-VASK informed CV360 with both English and Chinese subtitles. The video motto emphasizes that the “Future is not just about your academic qualifications but also your life experience”. This video accessible to the public is also used by career practitioners to inform business corporations to adopt CV360 for reforming corporate hiring systems for achieving a win-win scenario on both supply and demand sides of the labor market.