



Impact of the Project P.A.T.H.S. in Hong Kong and China

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the impact of a youth enhancement program entitled “P.A.T.H.S. to Adulthood: A Jockey Club Youth Enhancement Scheme” (Project P.A.T.H.S.) initiated and funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust. The Research Team developed curricula-based programs for Grade 7 to Grade 9 students based on the positive youth development approach and trained over 7,000 teachers and allied professionals. To date, more than 320 schools and 284,400 students (with 601,198 man-times) participated in the project in the Initial, Extension and Community-Based Implementation Phases. Findings based on different evaluation methods showed that the program was well-received by different stakeholders and the participants changed positively after joining the program. Because of its overwhelming success, the project was transplanted to 30+ schools in mainland China with the support of Tin Ka Ping Foundation. Client satisfaction and qualitative evaluation findings suggest that the project has positive impact on holistic development in students in mainland China.

Keywords

Positive youth development, Risk behavior, evaluation, Project P.A.T.H.S

Introduction

Emergence of youth problems in the global context demands for solutions to prevent adolescent risk behaviour. One strategy is to strengthen adolescent psychosocial competencies via the positive youth development approach (PYD) which would decrease adolescent risk behaviour. In Hong Kong, with a grant of HK\$400 million, a project entitled “P.A.T.H.S. to Adulthood: A Jockey Club Youth Enhancement Scheme” (Project P.A.T.H.S.) was initiated by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust to develop an age-appropriate, multi-year and evidence-based positive youth development program in 2004. Academics from five universities worked together to develop the program, train potential program implementers, provide support during the implementation, and evaluate the program [1-3].

Initial Implementation Phase (2005-2009)

Conceptually, programs of the Project P.A.T.H.S. were grounded in 15 positive youth development constructs (such as resilience, cognitive competence, self-efficacy and spirituality) present in the effective PYD programs in the field [4]. To systematically evaluate the program and triangulate the findings, different evaluation strategies were adopted (Table 1). Generally speaking, students and workers had positive experiences with the program. Compared with control students, students in the experimental schools also showed more positive (and less negative) developmental trajectories [1,5-9].

Extension Phase (2009-2012) and Community-Based Phase (2013-2015)

Because of the positive evaluation findings, with a further injection of HK\$350 million,

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Table 1: Major evaluation findings of the Initial Implementation Phase (2,3).

Evaluation Method	Sample	Major Conclusions
1. Pre-experimental design with pretest and posttest data	■ 546 students at Wave 1 with pretest and posttest data	■ Participants showed positive change in different outcome measures
2. Longitudinal experimental design (randomized group trial)	■ 24 pairs of schools (1 experimental school and 1 control school in each pair) ■ At Wave 8, 2,850 experimental subjects and 3,640 control subjects	■ Relative to control subjects, experimental subjects showed faster growth rates and slower decline rates in PYD measures ■ Relative to control subjects, experimental subjects showed slower growth rates and faster decline rates in risk behavior measures
3. Evaluation based on subjective evaluation (students)	■ 206,313 students	■ Positive evaluation of program, workers and usefulness revealed by quantitative and qualitative findings ■ Convergence of subjective outcome and objective outcome findings
4. Evaluation based on subjective evaluation (workers)	■ 7,926 workers involving 244 schools	■ Positive client satisfaction findings revealed by quantitative and qualitative findings
5. Secondary data analyses based on reports	■ 1,327 reports from 244 schools involving 223,101 students and 9,915 workers	■ Positive views of the program and workers ■ Different stakeholders regarded the program to be beneficial
6. Interim evaluation	■ Data collected from 378 randomly selected schools from 2006 to 2009	■ Positive evaluation findings ■ Improvement measures suggested
7. Process evaluation	■ Observation of 97 teaching units in 62 schools	■ High program adherence (around 85%) ■ High ratings on quality of program implementation process
8. Focus groups (students)	■ 252 randomly selected students in 29 focus groups	■ Predominately positive narratives on the program and its benefits
9. Focus groups based on implementers	■ 176 randomly selected workers in 36 focus groups	■ Positive evaluation findings ■ Improvements made
10. Student diaries	■ 1,138 randomly selected diaries	■ Program, workers and benefits viewed positively
11. Case study	■ 7 cases at the beginning, with additional cases collected	■ 5 P (program, people, process, policy and place) are important
12. Repertory grid evaluation	■ 104 randomly selected students	■ Self-identity system changed positively after attending the program

Table 2: Evaluation findings of the Extension Phase and Community-Based Implementation Phase of Project P.A.T.H.S. in Hong Kong and Tin Ka Ping P.A.T.H.S. Project in China.

Evaluation Strategy	Participants	Major Findings
Extension Phase (2009-2012)		
1. Client satisfaction evaluation (students)	■ 242,705 students	■ Different aspects evaluated positively
2. Client satisfaction evaluation (workers)	■ 9,765 workers	■ Positive evaluation of different aspects of the program
Community-Based Phase (2013-2015)		
1. Subjective outcome evaluation (students)	■ 52,263 students	■ Positive views of program, workers, and benefits revealed
2. Subjective outcome evaluation (workers)	■ 1,808 workers	■ Positive views of program, workers, and benefits revealed
1. Objective outcome evaluation (pre-experimental design)	■ 32,314 students	■ Compared with pretest scores, students showed improvement in different outcomes, including PYD measures, life satisfaction and thriving
Tin Ka Ping P.A.T.H.S. Project (2011-2018)		
1. Subjective outcome evaluation (students)	■ 20,181 students	■ Overwhelming positive evaluation of different aspects of the program
2. Subjective outcome evaluation (workers)	■ 442 workers	■ Workers had very positive perceptions
3. Qualitative evaluation (diaries)	■ 2,938 students	■ Content and related themes are positive; positive impact observed

the project was implemented again from 2009 to 2012 in the Extension Phase [10-11]. Subjective outcome evaluation findings were positive (Table 2). To enlarge the impact of the project in the community, the community-based phase was launched with a grant of more than HK\$20 million (Table 2). Subjective outcome evaluation findings revealed positive findings

[12]. Evaluation based on pretest and posttest data also showed that the participants showed positive changes on different indicators after joining the program [13].

Tin Ka Ping P.A.T.H.S Project (2011-2018)

As the Hong Kong experience was very successful,

the Project P.A.T.H.S. was transplanted to China in 2011 with support from Tin Ka Ping Foundation. Based on the pioneer work done in four schools in East China from 2011 to 2014 [14], the project focused on training in 2014/15 school year. From 2015/16 to 2017/18 school year, the project was implemented in more than 30 schools in China [15]. Client satisfaction and qualitative evaluation findings are very positive (Table 2).

Conclusion

There is evidence suggesting that the Project P.A.T.H.S. in Hong Kong and Tin Ka Ping

P.A.T.H.S. Project in China can promote holistic youth development and prevent adolescent risk behaviour. Additional evaluation data should be further accumulated, particularly those based on randomized group trials.

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