"Creating an inviting school:

A case study on introducing

Invitational Education (IE)

in a secondary school in

Tuen Mun"

Christian Alliance College

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to analyze whether the HELIX Model is suitable for Hong Kong schools. A case study would be used to describe the try-out of using the HELIX in a local school in Tuen Mun. In the later part, the elements of success in introducing IE in helping school to have good transformation in the current educational reforms would be discussed. A summary on the interviews conducted with the principal, a student and a core team member would be collaborated and reported and implication on students' life career and talent development would then be discussed. The concluding part is about the further implication for introducing new initiatives of IE for schools to further considerate.

A) Introduction of Invitational education

Invitational Education (Purkey & Novak 1996) is a theory of practice that addresses the total educational environment. It is a process for communication caring and appropriate messages which intended to call upon the onward realization of human latent qualities as well for identifying and altering those forces that demolish and devastate such qualities.

The four qualities of Invitational Education are respect, trust, optimism, and intentionally:

Respect: People are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly.

Trust: Education, which is a cooperative, collaborative activity, is important in both its process and product.

Optimism: People own untapped potential in all aspects of valuable human endeavor.

Intentionality: Human potential can be realized to the utmost by nourishing and maintaining Places, Policies, Processes, Programs, and specifically designed to invite development, and by People who are intentionally inviting with themselves and others, personally and professionally.

Invitational Education asserts that during the process of being a beneficial presence in the lives of students, every individual and object in and around schools puts in, or takes away something, Ideally, the factors of People, Places, Policies, Programs, And Processes should be so purposely welcoming. This is fundamental to create an environment where every person is cordially called for better development in his or her intellectuality, social skills, physical, psychological and spiritual health.
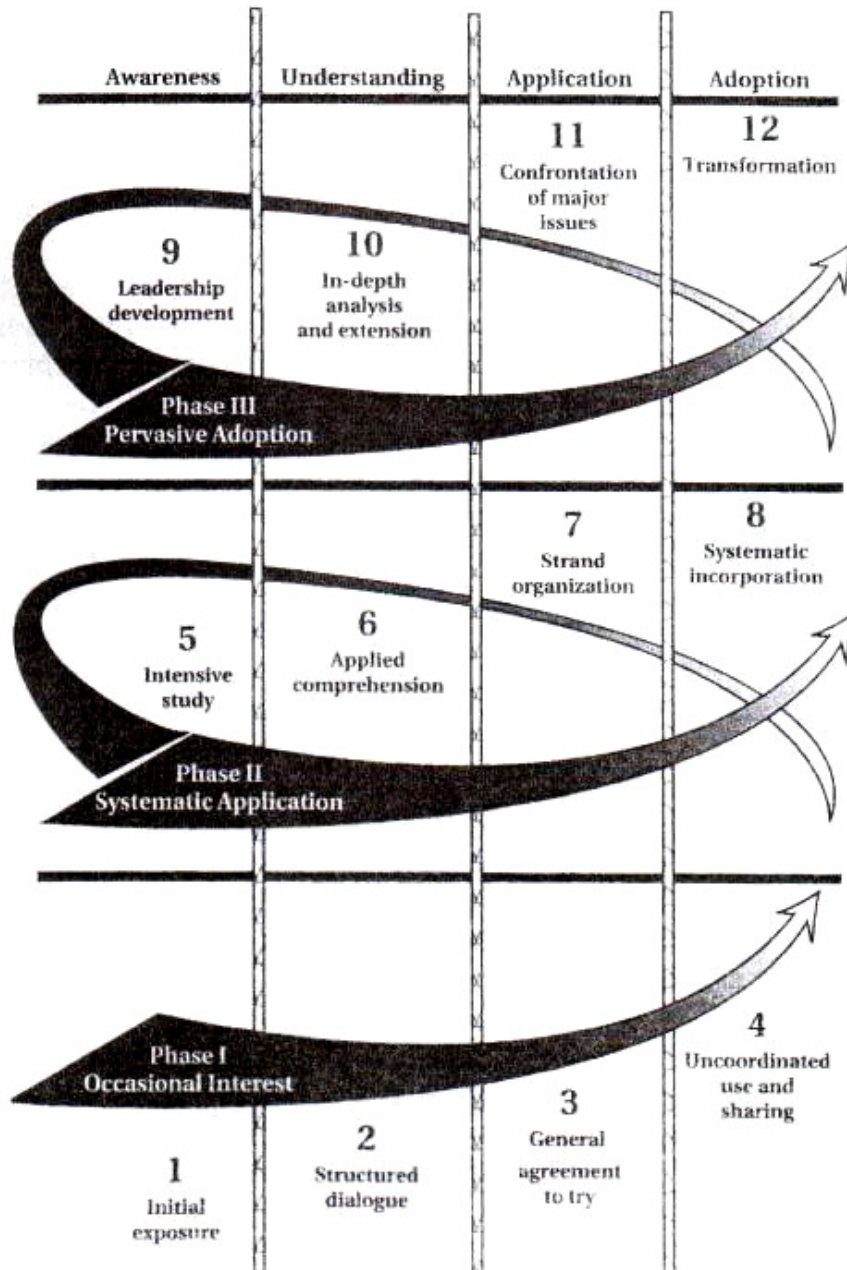
To implement the philosophy of Invitational Education, Purkey and Novak suggests a model for participating schools to follow. Purkey and Novak conclude that a cumulative 12-step plan of action for creating inviting schools that is called HELIX is developed by some schools, school systems and universities which have productively implemented invitational education programs.

The Invitational HELIX (Purkey & Novak 1996) is based on the idea that in order to facilitate the use of invitational education by educators, it is necessary to move from being committed to adopting it and keeping it going. Thus, adopting invitational education is engaged in four stages: awareness, understanding, application, and adoption.

In addition, schools can be at different phases in utilizing invitational education. With the progression of purposes in mind, three phases have been identified. They are namely occasional, systematic, and pervasive. They are subject to the school's degree of commitment.

HELIX spirals through four stages while progressing. HELIX's 12-step guide allows practitioners to identify at the stage their school is currently functioning and the next higher step in becoming an inviting school.

Fundamentals of Invitational Education

Awareness	Understanding	Application	Adoption
		11 Confrontation of major issues	**12** Transformation
9 Leadership development	**10** In-depth analysis and extension		
Phase III Pervasive Adoption			
		7 Strand organization	**8** Systematic incorporation
5 Intensive study	**6** Applied comprehension		
Phase II Systematic Application			
			4 Uncoordinated use and sharing
Phase I Occasional Interest		**3** General agreement to try	
1 Initial exposure	**2** Structured dialogue		

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B) How the HELIX model could be relevant to schools in HK within the current education reform framework?

The Reform Proposal from the Education Commission (2000) in Hong Kong points out that a school ought to be a place to nourish creativity and innovation, and to equip students to face the future with competent skills. Earning a living as well as the development of the whole of Hong Kong to compete with other countries in the global village are both essential. The whole reform is student-oriented and it facilitates students to become life-long learners who would be prepared with meta-cognitive skills and holistic education.

The philosophy of IE provides an appropriate theoretical framework which allows flexibility for teachers to effectively craft and sustain healthy school environments.

The four core values (optimism, trust, respect, intentionality) and five Ps (People, Places, Policies, Programs, and Processes) practically respond to the call for benefiting every individual in the school.

As a result, well-prepared school staff for this new paradigm shift is a critical element for the success in the whole school development process. Invitational Education (IE) initiative is extremely relevant and is an appropriate originality to the Hong Kong education emphasis in the new century. The importance of staff participation is expressed by Purkey & Novak (1996), 'education is concerned with more than grades, attendance and academic achievement. It is a process of becoming a decent and productive human being in a society committed to the appreciation and growth of all its members. It is about inviting every single person who enters a school to realize his or her relatively boundless potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavour.'

The value of HELIX is twofold: (1) it allows quicker identification of the level and stage of functioning of any individual or organization, and (2) it guides individuals and organizations towards successful application of the theory. The following narrative explains the 12 steps of HELIX across its three levels.

C)   New initiative of IE in a local school by using the HELIX

The school in this case study is called Christian Alliance College which is situated in Tuen Mun. Mr Poon has been newly employed as the School Principal since 2004. The school started to initiate IE in 2006. HELIX would be used to describe the schools experience in the new initiation of IE.

I)   Framework of HELIX with reference to the school

a)   On Occasional Interest (Phase I)

With a beginning awareness of Invitational Education, Mr Poon asked his staff to have more exposure in knowing more about the invitational education. The first thing to do was to send the staff to attend different seminars to have a general impression in IE. Then he assigned the two vice-principals, the Guidance master and the Discipline master, and himself, to join a two-day workshop organized by the Education Bureau. The vision of carrying out IE in the school further became clearer as workshops for all teaching and non-teaching staff were planned to be held in the staff development day.

With the support of the EDB, two workshops concerning the theoretical background of IE and experiences of IE schools in Hong Kong were held. Seeing believes. Hence, a school visit to an IE school nearby was organized and the staff could have a firs-hand experience in recognizing what an IE school would be like. Through the workshops, Teachers were asked to have structured dialogues. They were

made to appreciate the practices already taken place in the school and to review the present situation of the school and the way to improve the school in the context of IE.

Other events carried out include some kind of innovations such as the beautification of the school campus and the promotion of positive culture to incorporate new practices and beliefs into daily practice. In some occasions, such as the roll call and staff meeting, Mr Poon would intentionally give credit and praise to the staff and students for their hard work in making the school better. This recognition of success prepares the ground for advanced levels of practice.

To sum up, a top-down practice of implementing the IE can be recognized. The principal showed his sincerity and commitment in improving the school by his role modeling.

b)   On systematic Application (Phase II)

To share the vision, Mr Poon invited staff (two teachers who are with less than 6 years' teaching experience) from non-managerial level to form a core team with the above-mentioned managerial masters to have intensive study in order to apply the invitational education in a systematic way. They review on staff's opinions on the 5P's (People, Places, Policies, Programs, and Processes) and draft a proposal which is applicable for the present situation of the school. This practice ensures that the senior staff can have a chance to comment on the possible effect on the school culture as they are the important stakeholders in the school development. After further agreement was made, the principal invites three more teachers who are interested in IE to join the core team while the Guidance master, the Discipline master and one vice principal stepped down.

The principal emphasized leadership training and the clear vision of the co-coordinators in the new core team. As the two "less-experienced" teachers might lack of leadership skills, they were asked to join two workshops. One is the "Positive-culture" Workshop for teachers organized by Boaco Youth Centre. The other is the "Learning Circles" organized by Singaporean trainers. This practice ensured that the two teachers were ready for a more collaborative leadership but not a bureautic one. It also expanded the capacity of the two teachers in handling difficulties. In addition, the two co-coordinators were asked to submit a more detail proposal on the 5P's and establish preliminary performance indicators and criteria of success so that they can reflect if they were ready for and clear about the vision of introducing IE in the school.

Detailed presentations were made in the staff meeting and the administrative section in order to share the concrete ideas in implementing IE in the school. This put one step forward to the next phase.

After several meetings with the principal and the vice principal, the new core team started to have dialogues for an in-depth investigation on the implementation plan. According to the HELIX, rotation method should be used so that all strands will have input into each strand's goal, procedures, obstacles, overcoming obstacles and evaluation. Each of the core team members is required to have in-depth understanding on the 'P' and to reach consensus. During this period, the core team member attended workshop organized by the International Alliance of Invitational Education in order to equip with the skills in carrying out IE in the school.

c)   Pervasive Adoption (Phase III)

The goal of Level III is to have invitational theory pervade the attitudes of individuals and the cultures of organizations. This requires sustained concentration on basic concepts that leads to a logical integration of invitational theory. The intention of this phase is to develop the concerned parties' proactive stance to incorporate the deepest rational and moral commitments of invitational theory.

As the moment when the case studies was carried out , and the school started implementing IE at the early stage of phase II, the school does not enter Phase III. As a result, Further studies on the phase studies can only be carried out some years later.

II) School's perceptions on the new initiate of IE in the school.

Three individual interviews with the principal, a core IE team teacher and a Form Four student who was an active participant in extra-curricular activities were conducted in the school. This is to draw some qualitative feedback on the implementation of the IE of the school in these two years. Some significant points are as follows:

a)   The Principal' views

When asked about his will on carrying out IE in the school, Mr Poon frankly expressed his impression on the students in the school. He commented that students in general lacked self-confidence, tunnel-vision and were passive. As it is a Christian school, the core values in IE have much intersection which may feed the need. To invite students to achieve success, establishing students' self-image positively is fundamental. The school would nurture a positive and supportive culture for students to grow in.

During two-year preparation period, Mr Poon agreed that the school were in Phase II in the HELIX model. He thought that transforming a school which embedded with 40 years' culture was not easy. He was satisfied with the pace of the implementation as he stressed that thorough understanding and consensus among teachers is utmost important for the change, it is timely and costly though.

When asked about possible obstacles in the school, Mr Poon thought that difference in mind-sets between generations of teacher is significant. The only way to solve it is to encourage more sharing with more teachers, nurture some leaders to have deeper understanding of IE and invite more teachers to join together.

Concerning the support from the staff, Mr Poon expressed that more than 50% of the staff showed their stand in supporting IE. He thought that those who showed their hesitation would worry about a possible increase of workload. He stressed that excess workload would be a myth. He showed his optimistic view that teachers were willing to pay extra effort in helping the growth of the students.

Regarding the strategy in carrying out IE, Mr Poon expressed that the whole school approach is important. The whole school approach was carried out in two aspects. Firstly, it action plans were categorized in order to help all departments in the school to follow. Each department was required to have dialogues with the IE core in order to extract the elements of IE. As a result, the department concerned would consider the IE elements in their planning its own plans annually. The second one was by 'invitation'. When there existed a certain vacancy in any department, the IE core should invite different staff to help. For example, our Principal has invited the Laboratory Technician, who was very brilliant in music performance, to organize Chinese Orchestra; and invited a office staff member (who was a senior Girl Guide)

to organize the Girl Guide Team for students. As a result, all staff in the school can contribute their untapped potential to the school.

With respect to the critical aspect for a successful implementation of IE in the school, Mr Poon mentioned that 'companions' were utmost important. It is because a school is like a family but not a factory. Support and care are needed for staff to become intentionally inviting. As for leadership, he thought that senior staff should be pioneers in the initiation of IE. After that, middle managerial staff should play an important role in promoting IE as more collaboration is needed among the staff in different levels.

In the concluding part, Mr Poon stressed that school teachers should acknowledge one important change in the role of a school. From his thirty years' experiences, he witnessed that the educational system has been changing from an 'elite' system to a 'universal' system. Parents' and students' expectation on schools is no longer narrowed down to academic achievement only. A school is a place to help students equip with sufficient confidence to face future challenges.

b) **A Student's view**

An interview was conducted with a Form 4 student who participated actively in school extra-curricula activities (Drama Club and English Ambassador Scheme).

When asked about the changes of the school in these two years, the student thought that much effort had been put in providing more opportunities for students to participate in (such as drama performance in the town hall and new establishment of Girl Guides and Boy Scotts) and more emphasis had been put on helping students to establish a better manner (such as 'positive discipline').

The student provided an interesting view on the 'function of the school. He thought that a school was like a "terminal" and students were as passengers. Students

enter a school and prepare themselves for the next place they want to go. Therefore, a school should provide an atmosphere of learning and let students gain the most from the environment.

Concerning the career education in the school, the students recognized that the career department provided a general level of support, such as aptitude test and personal consultation, in helping him to formulate his mind of future career. He also learnt more about his interest through the activities held by the career department such as image –design interest class.

In relation to the talent development, the student thought that the school did provide many opportunities for students to take. To achieve success, students should seize the opportunities. Frankly speaking, he thought that the present atmosphere for students to show enthusiasm in developing their talent was not prevalent. He attributed it to student's lack of self-confidence.

Regarding the positive culture in the school, the student admitted that he only had few ideas on the school's implementation of IE. He welcomed the introduction of a positive culture to the school, but he expressed his hesitation on whether the school could make a transformation to the while school.

c)   **A Core team member's view**

When asked about her will on carrying out IE in the school, she expressed that she hoped students could grow in a positive atmosphere. Also, she wanted to see a great impact of IE on the team work among teachers. She thought that IE   was

suitable for the school as the teachers continued to treat students with concern and care, which is one of the utmost important foundations of IE.

She was also satisfied with the present pace of development of IE in the school. Although the school was not on full gear of the IE implementation, time consideration

should be taken into account as awareness and recognition from all the staff were gradual and important.

In view of the resistance in implementing IE, she admitted that some of the staff refused to accept the core values of IE which affected the full implementation of the IE philosophy in the school. Nonetheless, through her conversation with the teachers and the school, she thought that most teachers were generally supportive to the IE.

Concerning the strategy of introducing IE, she thought that a core group which would act as a consultation group was important for further development of the school under the context of IE. After that, there should be more communication with different departments in the school for the adoption of the IE plan.

With respect to the critical aspect for a successful implementation, she thought that co-ordination among the school staff was extremely important. The more the agreements on the issue are, the more effective the transformation of the school into an inviting school will be.

III)   External comments on the school after the implementation of IE

In April 2008, an US consultant from the International Alliance paid a school visit to our school. A summary on the situation of the school are as follows:

"Christian Alliance College already has an action plan and their IE committee is enthusiastic about implementing it. They now need to involve the teachers to get their ideas on how to apply IE so everyone feels they have ownership. I feel this school is on its way to becoming an inviting school. It is recommended the school could consider continuing enroll in the IE project in the coming years to receive ongoing training and support so that the school could achieve the level of being recognized as Inviting School."   (Observed by Dale Stowe, April 3, 2008 P.1)

The above summary shows that the implementation of IE is an on-going process and should be further extended to involve different people in the school in the school transformation.

IV)   Implications on students' life career and talent development

From the above information, we can recognize that the introduction of the IE to the school can contribute to the life career and talent development of students at a certain level.

First of all, the development of a positive culture will cultivate students' willingness to try out. Boykin (2000) says that all students can be challenged potentially in an academic setting with high expectation. And implementing multiple evidence-based activities would help exploit every student's potential for scholastic achievement. Students can know more about their talent and interest through participation. An environment with positive support would help students strive hard to explore and develop their talents.

In addition, teachers' state of mind has a great influence on students' talent development. Teachers' demonstration largely decides if a positive culture in the school can be developed and transmitted to students. Lee and Smith (1996) expressed that learning and caring community in the school enhances students' sense of unity and belongings. From the above interviews, both the principal and the teacher thought that general staff support in initiating IE would bring a success to students' development of their potentials. Yet, other individuals still pay a critical role in the transformation of culture.

The IE project would also enhance students' thinking on life career. Gysbers & Henderson (2006) defined life career development as "self-development over the life span through the integration of the roles, settings, and events in a person's life. Despite consultation form the Career guidance, students still need their own understanding about their interests and talents. The environment of the school provides a major setting for such understanding. The Principal and the teacher agreed that the core values in IE would help students build up self-confidence and encourage students to try out. This becomes the pre-requisite for students to plan for their further careers.

D)   Implications for school to initiate IE in school.

Purkey & Novak (1996) pointed out no rule of thumb for creating an inviting school because each school, like each family, has its own unique characteristics. Wong (2007), who carried out a thorough study on a secondary school in Hong Kong, points out that there are four crucial stages for the new initiatives to be implemented.

i)   Promote awareness and understanding

People or organizations do not always welcome changes initially. And changes may not be promptly recognized, as revealed in the interview with the student mentioned. However, changes bring challenges to people and they are sometimes disguised opportunities. Through more and more conversation and communication, the resistance of implementing IE would be reduced or even removed. In the case being studied, the actual planning and implementation of the action plan at different stages have brought valuable experiences to the core team members as they were learning and trying out the innovations simultaneously.

ii)   Application and trying out

When people speak, attempt, do investigation, go back over, people become more skillful, clearer ideas will be formed, stronger commitment will be found. A good deal of reflective experience is needed before conceivable vision be formed. In addition, dynamic interaction of organizational members and leaders is essential for changing the shared vision successfully.

iii)   Whole school involvement

Educational change and effectiveness depend on people who work collaboratively. In the case study concerned, the goals that had been set according to the five strands and the different novel practices were real measures for developing an inviting environment where students' potentials could be best recognized (not sure if you mean so, please check what u want to mean.). It also helped the staffs that were involved to look at the whole part of the school and to actualize team work to develop inviting places, policies, programs and processes before focusing on quality education and developing humans.

iv)   Leadership and Management Support

Throughout this study, the leadership of the school management team which was sharing and responsive has brought successful development of the whole process. The focused discussion between the principal and the core team members advocated an open communication among one another and this has facilitated trusting and open relationships and attitude in the school. Different stakeholders' views have been acknowledged and their satisfaction attained.

E)   Conclusion

Steyn advocates that the transformation of a school is a continuing process. Its success depends on several factors: internal factors, leadership and staff collaboration, all of which positively contribute to the inviting atmosphere in a school. It is hoped that an analysis and reflection on the case study cited can be carried out several years later for the sake to trace the development of the school. More thorough reviews can then be made to investigate the effectiveness of introducing IE initiatives (HELIX model) so that this study may be found useful for similar schools to develop IE initiatives in the future.

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Appendix I
The Inviting School Checklist
Observation Summary

School: Christian Alliance College
Date: April, 2008

People: Principal Pong Wing Poon and his IE committee were welcoming and warm. They were easy to talk with and quite enthusiastic about developing an IE programs for their school.

Places: The landscape was well kept and welcoming with orchids grown by each class. Student work was displayed throughout the school.

Processes: The teachers seemed to be involved in school decisions and are eager to work cooperatively on IE implementation.

Programs: I was taken to the library where some of the students showed a video of some of the plays performed in the school. The school offers a variety of extra-curricular programs for students.

Policies: Current school policies seemed to be well-known and reflected respect for everyone. As the principal and teachers develop the IE program, they need to make the policies readily available by posting them in prominent locations.

Summary: Christian Alliance College already has an action plan and their IE committee is enthusiastic about implementing it. They now need to involve the teachers to get their ideas on how to apply IE so everyone feels they have ownership. I feel this school is on its way to becoming an inviting school. It is recommended the school could consider continuing enroll in the IE project in the coming years to receive ongoing training and support so that the school could achieve the level of being recognized as Inviting School.

Appendix II

A) Interviews Questions for teachers (in Chinese)
1. 爲甚麼有意在宣道中學推行啓發潛能教育？
2. 你認爲這套理論爲甚麼適合在宣道中學推行呢？
3. 你滿意現時在校內推行 IE 的步伐嗎？爲甚麼？
4. 你認爲在宣道中學推行啓發潛能教育中最大的阻力是甚麼？你會如何突破這些阻力？
5. 在 IE 的推行上，你認爲同事支持這個發展嗎？爲甚麼？
6. 學校推行啓發潛能教育對你有何影響？
7. 在推行啓發潛能教育上，現時學校採取哪種策略，以讓不同的部問都能配合這個發展的需要？
8. 要成功推行啓發潛能教育，有何決定性的因素，爲甚麼？
9. 你認爲在推行啓發潛能教育時，應由哪些人領導？爲甚麼？
10. 如何能使學校的持份者認同啓發潛能教育的遠象？

B) Interviews Questions for students (in Chinese)
1. 你認爲學校的功能是甚麼？爲甚麼？
2. 你認爲最近兩年學校有何改變？
3. 你認爲學校有何措施讓你發展你的才藝？
4. 你認爲學校對你升學及就業發展上有何幫助？
5. 你認爲同學樂於參加 課外活動嗎？爲甚麼？
6. 你認爲學生應具備甚麼質素？
7. 你聽過啓發潛能教育嗎？
8. 你會歡迎學校推行正面文化嗎？
9. 你認爲在學校推行正面文化會否成功？