

## Why did school leavers want to study Yi Jin program? A survey on the motivation for participation among Yi Jin students

Poh-Chua Siah

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman

**Abstract.** This study aimed to explore the reasons of participation among students who participated in Yi Jin program. A total of 180 students from 2 institutes in Hong Kong were invited to participate in this survey study. The results showed that consumption related motivation and instrument related motivation were the two main motivations for participation. However, a further data analysis showed that respondents' motivation for participation was associated with their background.

**Keywords:** motivation for participation

### 1. Introduction

Unemployment rate of Hong Kong has risen rapidly since the outbreak of Asian Financial crisis in 1997. The rate in 1992 was 2.2%, but it went up to 6.2% in 1999, 7.3% in 2002, and 7.9% in 2003 (1). Not only experienced workers but also professionals have lost their jobs. According to a record from the Census and Statistics Department (2), the unemployment rate of service workers and shop sales workers was 3% in 1997 and went up to 9.2% in 2002; the unemployment rate of professionals was 0.8% in 1997 and went up to 2.7% in 2002.

This economic recession seriously affected those youths whose age between 15-19, have lower educational qualification and fewer working experience, since it was very difficult for them to get a job in the highly competitive job market. According to the Census and Statistics Department (3), the unemployment rate of this group of youth has risen from 10% in 1997 to 30.6% in 2002.

In order to solve the high unemployment rate of this group of youth, the Hong Kong SAR government launched some programs to assist them. For those youth who did not want to continue their studies but wished to get a job, they could participate in the Youth Pre-employment Training Program (YPTP). The program aimed to improve the competency of these youth by providing some vocational training courses and paid job practices that were not less than 6 months (6).

For those youths who preferred to continue their study but had poor academic results, they could participate in Project Yi Jin. This project aimed to improve educational ability of these youths, so that they were able to use the Yi Jin certificate to further their studies, such as the associate degree courses (4). Besides, this program also aimed to improve the competition of those working adults who did not have a full Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). The government emphasized the Yi Jin certificate was equivalent to a full certificate in HKCEE.

In the past, since the economic situation of Hong Kong is good, these secondary 5 school leavers were easily to get a job. However, as the job market was highly competitive nowadays, these secondary 5 school leavers not only could not find a job from the market but also could not find a chance to continue their studies to further enhance themselves, and thus turn out to be the so-called double loss teenagers. Yi Jin project was one of the strategies that Hong Kong government proposed to provide a second chance for these school leavers.

The Project Yi Jin was organized by the Education Bureau, and was launched by 9 tertiary institutes of

Federation for Continuing Education. This program was opened to all secondary five school leavers or adult learners aged 21 or above. All Yi Jin students must complete a programme of 600 study hours. The first 420 hours were occupied by 7 core subjects, which are Chinese, English I and II, Putonghua, Mathematics in Practice, IT Applications and Communication Skills. The remaining 180 hours were spent on elective subjects at students' choice in which they were related to vocational training, such as IT Applications, Business Studies, and Tourism Studies (4).

According to Mok (8), participation was one of the guiding features of the discourses of adult education. Studies in the area of participation usually included demographic information of the learners, analyses of their motivation for study and reasons for non-participation. Basically, there were three kinds of motivation for participation, which were consumption-related motivation (intellectual pursuit and social service), instrument related motivation (applicability to present job, greater chance of job promotion and helpfulness of job change) and friend-related motivation (making friends and influenced by friends).

In the review of motivation for participation, Kim and Merriam (5) acknowledged the diversity in the motivation of adult learners to participate in education. For example, Houle believed that there are 3 types of motivation of adult learners to participate in education, which are: goal-oriented, the activity-oriented and the learning-oriented. Sheffield further extended Houle's model to 5 factors, which were learning orientation, desire-activity orientation, personal goal orientation, societal goal orientation and need-activity orientation. Boshier extended the model to 7 factors, which were communication improvement, social contact, educational preparation, professional advancement, family togetherness, social stimulation and cognitive interest.

Studies also found age and gender differences in motivation to participate among adult learners that younger adults were more likely to be motivated by social relation than older adults. Men were more likely to be motivated by external expectations than women, and women were more likely to be motivated by the cognitive interest factor than men did. Besides, higher social class would participate in education that will improve their personal growth and self-understanding, whereas lower social class would participate in education that would meet their survival needs (5).

In general, most learners participated in adult education to obtain practical skills rather than to acquire knowledge. Nonetheless, there were differences between different age and sex groups in their motivations of participation. Older adults and women aimed to get personal satisfaction through participation, but younger adults and men aimed to get employment related skills through participation (7). However, whether the above-mentioned findings were applicable to Yi Jin participants or not still needed further investigation.

This study aimed to explore the reasons of participation among Yi Jin students. Two questions would be asked as follows:

First, what were motivation for participate among Yi Jin students?

Fourth, did Yi Jin students' motivation for participation associate with their backgrounds?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Respondents**

The researcher invited 180 Yi Jin students from 2 institutes to participate in this survey study. 172 questionnaires were returned. Among all respondents, 83.1% of them were males, and 82.4% were aged from 16 to 19.

### **2.2. Procedure**

The researcher asked participants to fill in a questionnaire during lectures. Before answering the questionnaire, the researcher informed participants that he would keep their data confidential, and they did not have to write down their names on the questionnaire so that their identities would only be disclosed to the researcher. The questionnaire included 2 sections. The first section measured respondents' background (their gender, age, place of birth, educational level etc), and the second section measure respondents' motivation for participation (consumption, instrument or friends-related motivation). The consumption motivation was measured by asking whether respondents participated in the program as there were courses that they were

interested in. The instrument motivation was measured by asking whether they participated in the program as the Yi Jin qualification was comparable to five passes in HKCEE; as they could use the certificate to apply for further studies; and as they could use this qualification to apply for government jobs. Lastly, the friend-related motivation was measured by asking whether they participated in the program as their parents or friends wanted them to do so. The questionnaires were collected after all participants had completed the task.

### 2.3. Data Analyses

This study employed *Chi-square test for independence* to examine the association between motivations for participants with respondents' background and other factors.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Background

*Gender* Among all respondents, 83.1% of them were males and 16.9% was females

*Living housing* 49.1% respondents lived in public housing, 25.1% in home ownership Scheme flats, 16.4% in private housing and 7.0% in villages.

*Tuition fees.* Most respondents' tuition fees were either paid by their parents only (56.2%) or loaned from the government only (31.5%).

*Educational levels.* Most respondents were form five school leavers (96.5%). 89.1% scored a total of 5 points or below in HKCEE. 93.9% failed in English Language (syllables B), 82.3% failed in Chinese Language, and 36.0% failed in Mathematics.

*Place of birth.* 87.1% was born in Hong Kong, and 11.7% was born in Mainland China.

*Working experience.* 58.7% of the total respondents had the working experience that was over 3-month period before studying Yi Jin.

*Plans after completing the study.* 68.8% respondents would like to continue their studies (full and part-time studies), and only 18.8% would like to find a job and not to continue their studies after completing Yi Jin project.

### 3.2. Motivation for Participation

Most respondents reported that they applied for Yi Jin program as there were courses that they were interested in (48.8%); the Yi Jin qualification was comparable to five passes in HKCEE (43.6%); no school accepted their application for further studies (26.7%) and they wished to use this qualification to apply for government jobs (22.8%). Less than 17% respondents reported their participation in the program was requested by their parents or friends.

*Gender.* The results did not find any significant association between gender and motivation for participation, all  $p > 0.05$ .

*Living housing.* The results found a significant association between living housing (private housing vs. public housing or home ownership scheme housing) and their motivation for participate,  $\chi^2(1, n = 166) = 3.875, p < 0.05$ . More respondents who lived in public housing aimed to participate in this program for applying government jobs than those who lived in private housing (28.6% vs. 15.9%). No other significant results emerged. .

*Working experience.* The results showed that the motivations for participation between those respondents who had working experience and those who had not were different. More respondents who had working experience were motivated by the possibility of getting a qualification that was comparable to five passes in HKCEE (51.5% vs. 32.4%) and the possibility of applying for a government job (32.7% vs. 8.6%) than those who did not. In contrast, more respondents who did not have working experience were motivated by the reasons of not able to find a school to accept their application for continuing their education (42.3% vs. 15.8%) and of asking by their parents to do so (23.9% vs. 11.9%).

*Tuition Fees.* The results of *Chi-square test for independence* showed that more respondents whose tuition fees were paid by loans than those were paid by their parents were motivated by the courses that they interested in (62.7% vs. 40.6%),  $\chi^2 = 7.29, p < 0.01$ . No other significant results emerged.

*Plans after Completing Yi Jin.* While comparing to those respondents who planned to find a job after completing Yi Jin program, more respondents who planned to continue their studies after completing the program were motivated by the courses that they interested in (55.3% vs. 28.1%) and by the problems they encountered while applying other schools to continue their studies (38.2% vs. 12.5%). In contrast, only a small percentage of them were motivated by using the Yi Jin certificate to apply for government jobs (7.9% vs. 71.9%).

#### **4. Discussion**

The main aim of this study was to explore the motivation for participation among those students who studied Project Yi Jin. The researcher used questionnaire survey method to collect data. The total number of valid questionnaire was 172.

In general, consumption related motivation and instrument related motivation are Yi Jin students' main motivation for participation, since most respondents participated in Project Yi Jin so that they could study the courses that they were interested in and they could get a qualification that was comparable to 5 passes in HKCEE.

However, a further data analysis showed that respondents' motivation for participation was associated with their background. Consumption-related motivation was associated with whether respondents' tuition fees were paid by their parents and whether they intended to continue their further education. This could be because these respondents did not need to consider about their future employment yet, so they were more emphasizes in whether the courses are related to their interests or not. Job related motivation was associated with whether respondents had working experience and whether they aimed to find a job after study. In contrast, these respondents understood the competition in job market and hope to get a job after the study, so they were more emphasis in the possibility of getting a job after the study, especially the government jobs which were more stable and better pay. Lastly, peer-related motivation was associated with whether respondents had working experience or not. More respondents who had no working experience were motivated by their parents than those who had working experience, these respondents may be more passive than those who have the working experience. May be they were forced to participate the program. The relationship between different types of motivation of participation with learning motivation could be an issue to explore further. .

According to W.K. Kellogg Foundation (10), one can improve the effectiveness of a program by conducting program evaluation, where organizations can find a better way to deliver their services and to improve their project management, and project directors can see problems more clearly and discover new avenue for growth. Therefore, to understand the motivation for participation among Yi Jin students would help programmers to understand whether their strategies to attract those youths who faced the problems of continuing study and finding a job were effective or not. The strategies that Hong Kong government employed to attract those Form 5 school leavers were to create courses that most youths are interested in, to promise them a future that they may use the certificate to apply for a job in the government which most youths were looking for, and last but not least, to apply for further study. Besides, to further enhance students' motivation to study, the government agreed to waive 30% of total tuition fees after they success their study.

The results revealed that Project Yi Jin did attract the targeted participants successfully, in which 89% participants were those who failed their HKCEE. Besides, the strategies adopted by Hong Kong government also met the needs of these youths that most students were attracted by the courses and the value of the certificate. Moreover, to motivate the participants to work hard in their study by promising they can get back 30% of their tuition fees after completing their studies was a success. So, the success of the project was not surprising, as it did elicit the motivation of participation of these double-lose teenagers and their parents.

As mentioned by Osborne (9), the goal of further education should not only emphasizes on increasing the number of participation, but should also on widening participation, that the further education should provide chance to those who have previously been excluded, so that they can have a second chance to further improve themselves to face the challenge of knowledge-based society. Project Yi Jin is an important attempt

of Hong Kong government in widening participation of further education by including those youths who faced difficulties in continuing their studies and in finding a job. This study showed that the promoting strategies adopted by Hong Kong government did achieve the goal of widening participation of further education.

## 5. References

- [1] Census and Statistics Department. (2009a). Statistical tables. Retrieved 06 Jan 2010 from <http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/showtableexcel2.jsp?tableID=006>.
- [2] Census and Statistics Department. (2009b). Statistical tables. Retrieved 06 Jan 2010 from <http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/showtableexcel2.jsp?tableID=010>
- [3] Census and Statistics Department. (2009c). Statistical tables. Retrieved 06 Jan 2010 from <http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/showtableexcel2.jsp?tableID=011>.
- [4] Education Bureau. (n.d.). Project Yi Jin. Retrieved 14 September, 2009 from <http://www.edb.org.hk/yijin/>.
- [5] Kim, A. & Merriam, S. B. (2004). Motivations for learning among older adults in a learning in retirement institute. *Educational Gerontology*, 30: 441-455.
- [6] Labour Department. (2009). Youth pre-employment training programme. Retrieved 14 September, 2009 from <http://http://www.yes.labour.gov.hk/y pyt/ home.aspx?lang=en>.
- [7] McGivney, V. (2000). Participation and non-participation: A review of the literature. In R. Edwards, S. Sieminski and D. Zeldin. (Eds). *Adult learners, education and training* (pp.11-31). London: The Open University.
- [8] Mok, Y. F. (1997). *Adult education participation in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: The Open University of Hong Kong.
- [9] Osborne, M. (2002). What works? Keynote presentation at 2nd International Conference on Lifelong Learning, Yeppon, Queensland. Retrieved 12 Dec, 2009, from <http://crll.gcal.ac.uk/docs/MOAustr0602.pdf>.
- [10] W.K. Kellogg Foundation. (2010). W.K. Kellogg Foundation evaluation handbook. Retrieved 10 Jan, 2010, from <http://www.wkkf.org/~media/10BF675E6D0C4340AE8B038F5080CBFC.ashx>.