

## **Honours Project Report**

# **A Comparative Study of Secondary School Students' Perspectives on Other-Learning Experience (OLE) in Mainland China and Hong Kong**

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## **I. Introduction**

### **1.1 Research Background**

Due to the academic pressure of ‘Gaokao’, also known as the University Entrance Examination in Mainland China (Sun, 2020), the extra-curricular courses or other-learning experience (OLE) takes little space in senior secondary school education. Although there are studies about ‘Su Zhi education’ and ‘Steiner Education’ in China, differences in the school-based curriculum are significant from school to school, province to province. Although some pilot provinces for the reform of the national education system like Jiangsu has claimed the realization of various experiential learning opportunities for students (MOE,2016). The quality of secondary schools’ extra-curricular activities in China remains until now nearly unexamined. Li (2005) indicates that a large number of schools have not yet formulated scientific and standardized evaluation systems on the school-based curriculum so that the benefits of experiential learning are totally neglected. The other learning experiences designed for students may be totally substituted by the formal subject curriculum due to the unspecified National Curriculum guide on secondary school experiential learning and the oppressive academic pressure. However, under a similar strong examination culture---HKDSE, the HK government takes ‘Whole Person Development’ as its main educational aim and adjusts this idea in the curriculum reform in which OLE takes an important role. Under the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum framework, Hong Kong students are required to participate in five areas of OLE - “Moral and Civic Education”, “Community Service”, “Career-related Experiences”, “Aesthetic Development” and “Physical Development”. It is one of the three major components that complement the study of the four core subjects and 2-3 elective subjects for the whole-person development of students. This study aims to explore students’ perceptions of OLE gained in the secondary school curriculum and its impacts on students’ further development under two different school systems. By comparing students’ other learning experiences in mainland China and Hong Kong, the advantages, as well as drawbacks of OLE implementations in the two education systems, will be examined. Possible means for OLE curriculum improvement will also be discussed.

### **1.2 Objectives of Research**

By comparing HK and Mainland students’ experience and perceptions on OLE, the advantages and deficiencies of the OLE curriculum in two different school systems will be revealed from students’ perspectives, which could inform curriculum reform initiatives for policymakers. Also, this research will explore the impacts of OLE on students’ further development in regard to personal characteristics and

academic performance. The data collected from students can be strong evidence for the positive impacts of OLE on students' whole-person development.

Based on the comparison of the different OLE curriculum and students' perspectives, this study will illuminate the theoretical significance of the positive impacts of OLE on enhancing students' whole-person development and empirical significance on curriculum reform initiatives in mainland China and Hong Kong.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- 1) How do university students perceive the impacts of OLE on their whole personal development?
- 2) What are the similarities and differences in the views and experiences of OLE between HK and Mainland students?

## **II. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Positive impacts of OLE**

The positive impacts of OLE on students were indicated in policy documents and numerous research. Students are expected to widen their horizons and develop their life-long learning interests, and they have the opportunity to “make meaning of their own direct, first-hand experiences” in OLE (EDB, 2017). According to recent research conducted by Yip and Fung (2019), experiential learning could bring positive outcomes to students in “humanistic values (HV), motivation (MO) and interpersonal (IP) performance”. The study also shows that experiential learning has significant benefits on students with low social status backgrounds. Besides, when student-led OLE is conducted in school, students show high achievement in “self-regulation, leadership for learning practice and reflective habits” (Zou, Mickleborough, Ho, & Yip, 2015). Further, OLE also brings positive impacts on students' performance of formal assessment. It widens “students' horizons and perspectives in their HKDSE study” (Yip, 2017).

### **2.2 Introduction of OLE education in Hong Kong**

According to Hong Kong Education Bureau (2017), OLE is based on a broad concept of ‘Life-wide Learning’ (全方位學習) which encourage students to extend their learning from classrooms to society through experiential learning (Yip, 2019). It is one of the three components of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum that complements 4 core subjects and 2 or 3 elective subjects for whole-person development of students. According to EDB (2010), New Senior Secondary Curriculum Other Learning Experiences Parent's Pamphlet. OLE aims to provide students with a broad and balanced curriculum with essential learning experience aims to nature the five Chinese virtues: ‘Ethics, Intellect, Physical Development, Social Skills and Aesthetics’ (德、智、體、羣、美). Apart from offering structured

lessons in the five OLE domains - Moral and Civic Education; Physical Development, Aesthetic Development; Community Service; Career-related Experiences, Hong Kong schools are providing different modes of learning opportunities to supplement classroom learning such as learning after school or on Saturdays, co-curricular activities outside the classroom, cross-curricular learning days, etc, in planning their school-based OLE programmes.

Other Learning Experiences	Suggested Time Allocation of OLE (in percentage) (Latest)
Moral and Civic Education	<p><b>10–15% (S5&amp;S6) and ≥ 10% (Effective from S4 in the 2021/22 school year)</b></p> <p>(For each area, schools have the flexibility to make adjustments accordingly upon their existing practices and strengths.)</p>
Community Service	
Career-related Experiences	
Aesthetic Development	
Physical Development	

(Figure 1. Suggested Time Allocation of OLE (in percentage) (Latest), EDB Website)

## 2.3 Introduction of OLE education in mainland China

Experiential learning is conducted in a form of a ‘comprehensive practical course’ (綜合實踐活動課) in mainland China to facilitate students’ all-round development. The Ministry of Education specified six literacies of an ‘all-round person’ - rich in cultural deposits (人文底蘊); scientific spirit (科學精神); learning to learn (學會學習); healthy living (健康生活); taking on responsibility (責任擔當); innovation in practice (實踐創新) (The State Council, 2016). Educators can carry out curriculum reform according to the big literacy framework. However, the specified national curriculum guide on OLE is absent. When mainland senior secondary schools are adopting school-based OLE activities for their students, there are notable differences from school to school even located in the same city. One problem mainland China is facing right now is the opportunity gap of students towards OLE and extra-curricular activities.

According to Zhang & Tang (2017), there were opportunity gaps between different groups of students in terms of school location and family background. On the one hand, several problems were pointed out in an investigation on the status and problems of extracurricular learning activities in China (Chen, Wang, & Yu, 2014): “Exam-oriented” tendency in learning activities is heavy; Students lack “socialization” consciousness in learning; the mismatch between students’ favourite activities and the activities they attend; students’ neglect on the importance of extracurricular learning. On the other hand, the positive

effects brought by extracurricular activities to students are also significant. Wang, Li, and Dou (2020) indicated that participation in extracurricular sports promoted Chinese adolescents' life satisfaction indirectly by reducing their academic stress. Also, it brought the moderating effect of having an extroverted personality. Thus, it's reasonable to balance academic and extracurricular activities in order to bring the most benefits to students.

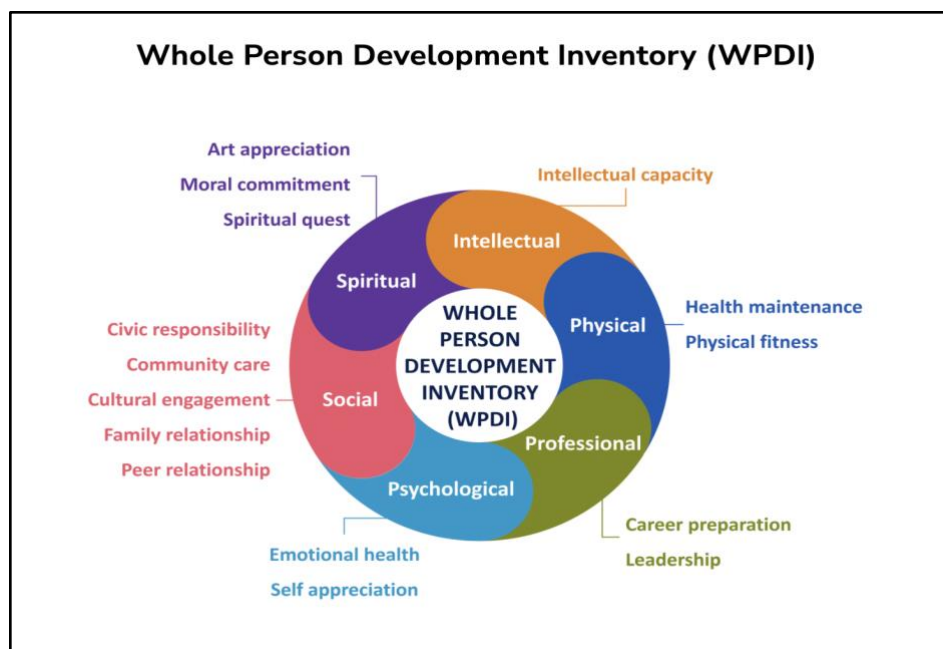
## **2.4 Research gap**

All previous studies indicate the benefits of OLE curriculum brought to students' personal development in secondary school learning, which suggested that we should correctly approach supplementary education, enrich students' social practical activities and lead the diversified whole-person development of students learning experience. Promote and improve students' life-wide learning in school-based curriculum for Other Learning Experience. However, the study of long-term impacts of secondary school experiential learning on undergraduates' studying and learning was nearly unexplored. Thus, the hypothesis of this research is that secondary school's OLE have positive impact on university students' further development in personal characteristics and academic achievement.

## **III. Research design**

### **3.1 Methodology**

A mixed methodology was adopted in this study. First, quantitative method is used in the form of online survey to verify the positive impacts of OLE on students' further development for research questions 1. The survey questions are based on the Whole Person Development Inventory (WPDI) developed by Hong Kong Baptist University. WPDI is an assessment tool with universal WPD concepts and the first WPD assessment developed for university students in Chinese society (Ng et al., 2020). A deliberate attempt to observe the correlation between participation experiences and variables of positive impacts OLE brought to students' further personal development in university will be made in research measurement.



(Figure2. Whole Person Development Inventory, EdUHK SAO Website)

In parallel to this survey on personal characteristics and academic-related development in university, qualitative in-depth interviews for research question 2 will be conducted individually with a small number of students from the sample groups to evaluate their perceptions of senior secondary school OLE. The unit of analysis is individual undergraduate students who have either completed secondary school education in Hong Kong or Mainland China. Two different methods - survey and in-depth interview, are utilized in data collection. The similarity and differences between the OLE activities under the two systems and their pros and cons will be examined based on students' perceptions.

### 3.2 Participants

The participants must be undergraduate students who have completed three-year senior secondary school education in a local public secondary school either in mainland China or Hong Kong. Besides, participants also need to have at least 2 OLE experiences during their secondary school study. In order to obtain samples with more diverse socio-demographic characteristics, Students from each batch will be selected based on a relatively balanced number of genders, areas of study (STEM and Arts). For the selection of participants, snowball sampling and purposive sampling are used. First, a total of 40 students will be representatives of the mainland and Hong Kong groups to do the online survey. The 40 participants are divided into two even sampling groups (20 each), namely 'mainland China' and 'Hong Kong', based on their educational background. Nonprobability sampling methods – snowball sampling will be used when inviting undergraduate students to do the survey. Then, a second sampling - purposive

sampling, will be conducted within the original two sampling groups that have done the survey. 6 students will be invited to participate in the in-depth interview based on their time convenience and the quality of the survey feedback. The interviewees are all senior undergraduate students majoring in English Education at the Education University of Hong Kong. 3 of them are mainland students with mainland secondary education backgrounds, and the others are Hong Kong students with local secondary education backgrounds. In order to minimize the differences in education equality between cities. Mainland interviewees are selected from big cities with highly developed economies like Hong Kong, which are Tianjin, Beijing, and Shanghai.

#### Interviewees Information

Code	Gender	Identity	Secondary Education	OLE participation times
A	F	Mainland - Tianjin	government school	2-3
B	M	Mainland - Beijing	government school	4-5
C	M	Hong Kong	Direct Subsidy Scheme	4-5
D	F	Mainland - Shanghai	government school	2-3
E	F	Hong Kong	aided public school	6-7
F	F	Hong Kong	aided public school	4-5

### 3.3 Data Collection

The survey, namely ‘Secondary School Other Learning Experiences’ (Appendix 1), will be conducted with 40 undergraduates who have fully completed senior secondary school education in either mainland China or Hong Kong. An online survey will be conducted via Google Forms to collect participants’ views of secondary school OLE. The survey approximately takes 5 minutes for each participant which aims to investigate the correlation between OLE participation and impacts on further personal development. After the survey, the responders are asked to identify others who belong to the target participants. Subsequent respondents are selected based on the referrals until the total number of participants meets 40 people. In addition, an in-depth face to face individual interview will be conveyed with 6 participants who have done the survey. The interview is semi-structured with open-ended questions (Appendix 2) aimed at investigating students’ further perceptions of the secondary school’s OLE impacts. Each individual interview will last approximately 20 minutes via Zoom. The process will be recorded in the format of video. The transcribed data from the interviews will be further reviewed, analyzed, and summarized by

researchers. A consent form was collected from all participants both before doing the online survey and the interview.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The quantitative data analysis of the survey relies on the “collection of numerical data which are then subjected to analysis using statistical routines” (Picciano, 2004). The aim of the quantitative phase is to confirm the positive impacts OLE brought to students’ further personal development in university. The survey will adopt a 5-point Likert scale that contains 10 questions in English to explore secondary school’s OLE impacts on students’ personal characteristics and academic performance in university. After collecting the data from students’ responses, scatterplots will be made on SPSS to verify the correlation between OLE time participation and variables of impact. The qualitative data analysis of the interview has three components - Data reductions through the procedure of coding and categorisation of the description obtained in the interviews; Data display through the procedures of comparison and dimensionalisation of the coded and categorized data; Conclusions & verification by integrating and interpreting the displayed data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

## **IV. Findings**

In the course of quantitative data analysis, the similarities and differences of the OLE impacts on the two groups’ WPD are revealed to find the relationship between OLE participation frequency and WPD. Also, through the qualitative data analysis, two significant themes developed from one-to-one interviews, which are students’ needs and interests, and students’ personal development in college.

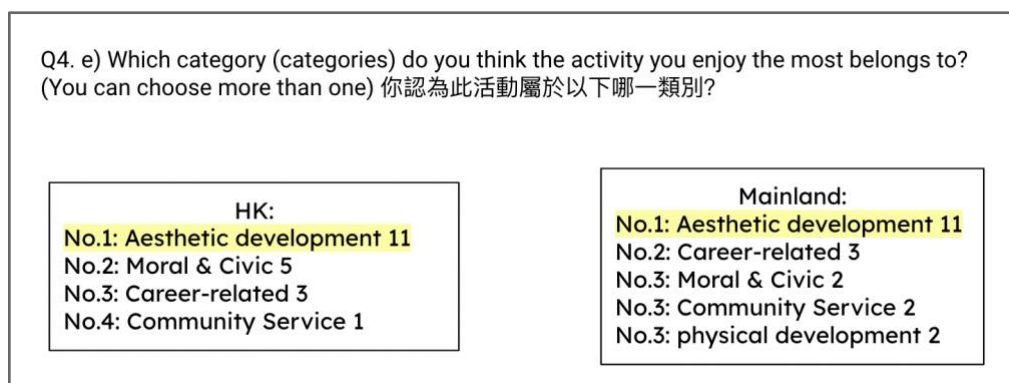
### **4.1 Findings - Quantitative Phase**

The quantitative survey data were collected from students’ own perception of the secondary school’s OLE impacts on university’s WPD. Participants were asked to choose a number from 1-5 on the 5-point Likert scale for the six domains: spiritual, intellectual, physical, professional, psychological, and social. 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree. The average score of overall WPDI and WPDI in each domain thus can be compared between Hong Kong and mainland groups. A score above 3 is considered the positive impact of secondary schools’ OLE on students' WPD in university. Therefore, the higher the score is, the more positive participants perceive the OLE impacts on university’s WPD.

The results revealed intriguing similarities and differences between the two groups. From the data collected, both HK and mainland students perceive secondary schools’ OLE brought an overall positive impact on their WPD in university since all WPDI scores in each domain are above 3 (Figure 4). Besides,

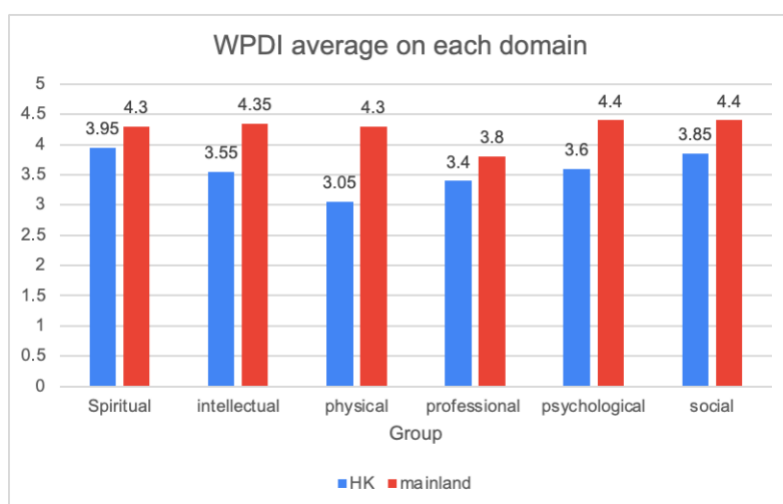


most of participants enjoy the OLE activity about Aesthetic Development the most. Same with the mainland group, 11 HK students categorized their favourite OLE activity as aesthetic development (Figure 3). In the form of drama/opera performance & appreciation, music concerts, visiting museums, school choir, etc.



(Figure 3 The number of students choosing the most enjoyable OLE category)

Another similarity is found in the WPDI score results in the six domains. The lowest two WPDI for both HK and mainland groups are physical and professional development (Figure 4), which means students in the two groups perceive OLE has relatively low impacts on their university's physical and professional development compared to the other 4 domains of WPD.



(Figure 4 average WPDI on six WPD domains between HK and mainland batches)

In terms of the differences, the average frequency that HK participants' senior secondary school held OLE activity for students is 2.3 times/month whilst mainland participants is 1.3 times/month (Figure 5). Although HK students have 1 more chance to participate in OLE activity than mainland students every month on average, and there is a significant difference between the monthly OLE activity participation

frequency of HK students and mainland students,  $p=0.018 < 0.05$  (Figure 6), the WPDI of the two groups are unexpected.

组统计					
	Group(1hk 2mainland)	个案数	平均值	标准差	标准误差平均值
Frequency (times/month)	1	20	2.30	1.559	.349
	2	20	1.30	.865	.193

(Figure 5 average times/months, Std. Deviation)

独立样本检验										
莱文方差同性检验				平均值同性 t 检验						
		F	显著性	t	自由度	显著性 (双尾)	平均值差值	标准误差差值	差值 95% 置信区间 下限	上限
Frequency (times/month)	假定等方差	7.027	.012	2.508	38	.017	1.000	.399	.193	1.807
	不假定等方差			2.508	29.672	.018	1.000	.399	.185	1.815

(Figure 6, Independent Sample t test on OLE participation frequency)

The average score of WPDI shows a reversed result with the OLE activity frequency. The mainland group has an overall higher WPDI average than the HK group, with a score of 4.26 and 3.57 respectively (figure 7). There is a significant difference between the two groups regarding the OLE activities' impacts on students' whole personal development in college according to students' self-evaluation,  $p=< 0.001$  (figure 8). This indicates that mainland students' secondary schools' OLE have more positive impacts on their whole person development in university. In addition, the difference in the positive impacts is significant, especially in the domains of intellectual ( $p=0.002$ ), physical ( $p<0.001$ ), and psychological development ( $p=0.009$ ) (figure 9).

组统计				
	Group(1hk 2mainland)	个案数	平均值	标准差
WPDl Average	1	20	3.5665	.63451
	2	20	4.2575	.49118
			标准误差平均值	
				.14188
				.10983

(Figure 7, Whole Person Development Inventory (WPDl) Average)

独立样本检验									
莱文方差等同性检验					平均值等同性 t 检验				
	F	显著性	t	自由度	显著性 (双尾)	平均值差值	标准误差差值	差值 95% 置信区间 下限	上限
WPDl Average 假定等方差	.823	.370	-3.851	38	<.001	-.69100	.17942	-1.05423	-.32777
不假定等方差			-3.851	35.755	<.001	-.69100	.17942	-1.05498	-.32702

(Figure 8, Independent Sample t test on WPDl Average)

独立样本检验										
莱文方差等同性检验					平均值等同性 t 检验					
	F	显著性	t	自由度	显著性 (双尾)	平均值差值	标准误差差值	差值 95% 置信区间 下限	上限	
spiritual 假定等方差	2.853	.099	-1.559	38	.127	-.350	.224	-.804	.104	
不假定等方差			-1.559	35.344	.128	-.350	.224	-.806	.106	
intellectual 假定等方差	.008	.930	-3.363	38	.002	-.800	.238	-1.282	-.318	
不假定等方差			-3.363	37.987	.002	-.800	.238	-1.282	-.318	
physical 假定等方差	.239	.627	-3.799	38	<.001	-1.250	.329	-1.916	-.584	
不假定等方差			-3.799	36.356	<.001	-1.250	.329	-1.917	-.583	
professional 假定等方差	.133	.717	-1.337	38	.189	-.400	.299	-1.006	.206	
不假定等方差			-1.337	37.579	.189	-.400	.299	-1.006	.206	
psychological 假定等方差	3.343	.075	-2.774	38	.009	-.800	.288	-1.384	-.216	
不假定等方差			-2.774	31.765	.009	-.800	.288	-1.388	-.212	
social 假定等方差	1.520	.225	-1.915	38	.063	-.550	.287	-1.131	.031	
不假定等方差			-1.915	31.869	.065	-.550	.287	-1.135	.035	

(Figure 9, Independent Sample t test on WPDl 6 domains)

Along with the above findings, the correlation test verified that there is no linear relationship between the OLE participation frequency and WPDl Average score ( $r = -0.001$ ). Thus, students' whole person development in university may not be related to the frequency of OLE participation in their secondary education. Before doing the main part valuation for the six domains of WPD, participants were asked to recall, categorize and describe their favourite OLE activity in which they participated in secondary school. Besides, all questions set in the 5-point Likert scale were premised on the basis of the influence of OLE in secondary schools. Thus, the results could minimize the distractions of other facilitations such as

the influence of community or grown-up environment. In conclusion, Mainland students have a higher average WPDI than HK students, but it has nothing to do with the participation frequency since HK students have higher participation. So the students' college WPDI brought by secondary school OLE may be relevant to the quality and scale of the activity.

相关性			
		WPDI Average	Frequency (times/month )
WPDI Average	皮尔逊相关性	1	-.001
	显著性 (双尾)		.997
	个案数	40	40
Frequency (times/month)	皮尔逊相关性	-.001	1
	显著性 (双尾)	.997	
	个案数	40	40

(Figure 10, *Correlation between WPDI average and OLE participation frequency*)

## 4.2 Findings - Qualitative Phase

### 4.2.1 Students' needs and interests

OLE activities based on students' needs and interests in diversity seem to come out as the main theme and are mentioned by most of the interviewees. The results show that all the interviewees from the mainland and Hong Kong groups want to have more OLE opportunities in secondary schools. When asked whether they think the school's time allocation of OLE activities and academic learning is reasonable, all mainland interviewees mentioned that the OLE opportunities are limited because of the high academic pressure, thus they either think it is reasonable to compromise or need more time for OLE. In the contrast, all three Hong Kong interviewees indicated that they put satisfactory time and effort into OLE and didn't mention the academic pressure as a hinder to participating in those activities. In some way, having OLE become an alternative other than studying for Hong Kong students. Interviewee F, a final year English major undergraduate student who graduated from an aided public secondary school in Hong Kong indicated that:

*“I didn’t put much time into learning when I was in my secondary school because I am not interested in it, but I spent a lot of time and effort in my school’s drama club as the club leader. And I learnt a lot about from that, such as how to find a person’s talent and use that person in the right place” (F)*

Similarly, all HK interviewees pointed out that they have freedom of choice based on personal preference, or to a certain degree, when choosing the OLE activities school arranged for them. Only mainland participant D– who graduated from a Shanghai government school, doesn’t have freedom of choice of OLE and wishes so. One HK interviewee particularly mentioned she expected to hold her own activity based on her interests. She is also a final year undergraduate who graduated from an aided public school.

*“Yes, a certain degree of freedom. There are compulsory activities for the whole school as well like the sports meeting, but I would love to have more freedom like organize my own activity” (E)*

When asked about what kind of OLE activities they want the school to hold more. 5 out of 6 participants (3 mainlanders & 2 HKers) mentioned physical development, such as outdoor sports, outdoor activities related to natural science, physical activity which can get everyone’s participation, or physical exercise based on students’ preference. One mainland participant (D) who has a Shanghai government secondary school background particularly indicated that students should do exercise with preference.

*“I hope to have more OLE on physical development. Annual event like sports meeting is not enough. Students are sitting in the classroom all day long without exercise. That is really bad for health. Students should do exercise with preference, schools can provide different kinds of exercise for students to choose.” (D)*

One mainland participant (B) from Beijing mentioned community service besides physical development, he said there are good resources and opportunities for students to learn about different communities because they come from different ones, so students may better understand and serve the community. Besides, one HK participant (F) mentioned she wanted to have more career-related experience. She wanted to know more about programmes in universities and what career path they may lead to. She even suggested that secondary school can provide some internship opportunities for students to facilitate their career-related skills.

In the last part of the interview, participants were asked to define what a good OLE activity is and to give suggestions for their local secondary schools. Four common views are made for a good OLE activity. First, it should be based on students’ interests to make the activity interesting. Second, a good OLE activity should be student-centred, give space for student autonomy and provide them with hands-on experience. Third, it must be different from normal lessons. Fourth, students can learn something new



through the activity and be able to produce output or reflection. Furthermore, catering for the diversity of students' interests is also highlighted in the suggestions interviewees gave.

*"Schools should give more choices to students, let students choose freely among the activities. Also, schools should ensure fairness by providing enough quotas. In order to develop students' talents, schools can help to find and cultivate students' interests and cater for the diversity of interests." (D)*

There are also some common suggestions made by the two groups other than catering for students' diversity of interest. According to the interview data, participants suggested that schools need to plan well and provide activity guidelines for students to preview and select. Besides, outdoor or outside of school activities need to be held more. Moreover, schools should be flexible about students' ideas, develop students' talents and help them to acquire some knowledge and skills.

#### **4.2.2 Impact of OLE on students' personal development in college**

When asked about the benefits brought by secondary OLE on personal development in college. 5 out of 6 said OLE helped personal characteristics in college. Only one mainland student (A) from Tianjin said OLE doesn't help her characteristic development and it may be related to the limited opportunities and the form of the OLE activity. She mentioned that OLE is just for relaxing under high academic pressure, and the form of the activities is similar to lectures. However, the other five students all agreed that OLE has brought positive impacts on their personal development in college. All Hong Kong participants and 1 mainland (B) participant mentioned OLE helped improve their interpersonal relationships in college. C indicated that the camping activities and outdoor training OLE helped him build friendships with his schoolmates. E commented that community service drives her to think about humanity and life, and guided her to realize the importance of relationships. But when asked about the impacts on critical thinking skills, she indicated she didn't gain many critical skills in OLE but in liberal study lessons through debate. F strongly agrees with the positive impacts on interpersonal relationship skills.

*"Yes, OLE definitely helped my interpersonal relationship skills, I get it in drama class. Interpersonal relationship is very important in university, it helps you understand people and respect them." (F)*

Besides, one mainland participant (D) mentioned the benefits of building a positive mindset brought by secondary school OLE. She marked that her badminton teacher is an optimistic person and this sports activity somehow trained her to think positive when facing obstacles in university.

Other than the positive impacts on students' personal characteristics, 5 out of 6 interviewees mentioned that secondary OLE helped their academic performance in college except for Hong Kong interviewee E. C particularly mentioned that the OLE he had in secondary school helped his literature study in college, as well as his time-management skills.

*“Yes, OLE activities in my secondary school related to music and history definitely helped my literature grade in university. Humanity and literature are interrelated, the nurturing will come back to you in college study. Also, I learned the importance of time management and self-regulation, because I need to schedule my OLE activity plan.” (C)*

Mainland interviewee B explained the positive academic impacts on his group work. He indicated that he is willing to be the group leader when doing group work because of the leadership he developed from his secondary school education. Also, D mentioned that OLE activities related to physical development taught her to build concentration on academic study as well, so she has no problem focusing on her study at school.

Other than personal characteristics and academic impacts, two participants (D; E) mentioned OLE makes them pay more attention to society and community. D said secondary school's OLE helped her to do more volunteer work in college. Through the volunteer work, she found her identity as a member of the community. Hong Kong interviewee E indicated that the community service she has done in secondary OLE inspired her to read the news more and pay attention to society's needs, driving her to get in touch with the society initiatively.

When asked about skills or knowledge participants wish to get through secondary school OLE to help them perform better in university, both HK and mainland students mentioned interpersonal relationships, which may indicate that students' expectation meets with the outcomes, as 4 out of 6 mentioned OLE helped interpersonal relationship in college when asked about the impacts. Furthermore, two participants (A; E) mentioned resilience and adaptability in a new environment. They perceive resilience as an essential skill not only because it's difficult for freshmen to adapt to the new environment in college, but also because it is the fast development pace of society.

## **V. Discussion**

This study examined the impacts of secondary school OLE on university students' whole personal development and explored the similarities and differences in students' perceptions of their OLE between the mainland group and Hong Kong group. It reveals that students are benefited from OLE in terms of their personal characteristic development and academic development in college. The interview and survey results



shed the light on the importance of the activity quality rather than the quantity.

From the quantitative research, it is noticed that although Hong Kong students have relatively higher OLE opportunities, but with relatively lower positive impacts on whole person development in university. And the causes of this result may be relevant to the quality and scale of the OLE activities. What should be noticed is that almost all OLE activities mainland students participated in are collective event which requires a large number of participants such as annual sports meeting or kite-flying festival. The utilization of facilities and large spaces is easier for mainland schools because of geographic advantages. Thus, it may be one of the possibilities that OLE in mainland left a more impressive memory to students that improved their WPD in their own perceptions. However, when talking about the quality of the OLE, it's hard to compare the school resources and define the qualities of a good OLE activity. Thus, further research can explore more on the aspect of qualities of good OLE.

As regards physical development, the strong desire to participate in outdoor activities can be seen in both interviewee groups. It's understandable that both Hong Kong and mainland secondary schools have faced their own challenges in holding outdoor OLE activities for students. Hong Kong schools may not be able to hold large scale sports events due to the space restriction. Most schools need to book public sports field in advance to hold outdoor physical activities because they don't have enough space inside their school. Students who luckily participated the events close to nature such as hiking or camping generally treasured and appreciated the experience a lot. On the other hand, mainland secondary schools normally have larger spaces than schools in Hong Kong, so they can hold more sports events at school. But students still lack opportunities to do so due to academic pressure. So they want to do more exercise outside of the classroom. 'Sitting in the classroom out day long is not good for health' as one mainland participant mentioned. To sum up, both mainland and Hong Kong secondary schools need to do more to cultivate students' awareness of healthy lifestyle by providing more opportunities for physical development. Other than physical development, professional development is also a domain which get the lowest WPDI for both Hong Kong and mainland group. Participants perceive they have relatively lower professional development in college under the impacts of secondary OLE. It makes sense that both Hong Kong and mainland China are under an exam-oriented educational system so that the vocational or professional education may not be most of the schools' consideration. However, the needs are getting recognized as the rising of students' demands and the related research on the benefits of cultivating students' professional knowledge in the 21st century. Likewise, students may not know how to choose their major or career path if they are not exposed to the related career experience or knowledge. Consequently, the importance and benefits of professional development in secondary OLE should be valued.



Although the group of students from Hong Kong may not suffer as much cultural adaption as the group of mainland students faced since they all study in Hong Kong. Being resilient to a new environment becomes a common skill expected to acquire from secondary OLE by both groups. The support to better assist secondary fresh graduated students quickly adapting to the university environment seems to be not enough. The bridge should be built by both secondary schools and universities, and OLE aiming to cultivate students' resilience could be developed and executed more effectively. In addition, the ability to recover quickly from difficulties and adapt well in the face of a new environment can be faced as an essential skill to survive in a fast-paced society like Hong Kong or mainland China. It's also a key feature of future education especially in facing the rapid societal changes and unexpected disruptions such as COVID-19. Besides resilience to a new environment, interpersonal skills also come out as the common expectations brought by secondary OLE to university students, which places an important role in the university, especially an inclusive place where cross-culture communication happens frequently. From the interview data, we can see that students' learning expectations meet with the learning outcomes in terms of interpersonal relationship skills. They have gained leadership and communication skills through the OLE activities. Intercultural understanding is also based on interpersonal communication. It's essential for university students to acknowledge the difference and work with people from different countries respectively. As for academic performance, the participants from two groups in the interview mentioned the benefits like learning motivation, humanistic values, leadership in group work, and concentration on study. It could be interpreted that student-centered spoon-fed style of teaching in most the Asian education system is not the only way to improve students' academic quality, alternative learning experiences can also efficiently facilitate students' academic accomplishment. Overall, the study findings echo with most of the literature that OLE has brought many benefits to students including interpersonal relationships and academic performance, and this study verified that there is no big gap in the acknowledgement of the benefits between mainland and HK groups.

## **VI. Recommendations**

According to the OLE guidelines from the Education Bureau of Hong Kong, there are specified regulations about quantity but not the quality of OLE. The quantitative research result may indicate that Hong Kong schools tend to focus on meeting the time requirement and neglect or don't know how to ensure the quality of OLE activities. Nonetheless, we can see that EDB has noticed this problem and reduced its OLE time allocation by adapting the rigid time requirements- 15 per cent (405 hours), to a flexible time suggestion. "The new suggested time allocation of OLE is 10% or above effective from S4 in the 2021/22 school year. A maximum or minimum percentage is adopted in place of a rigid number to highlight this flexibility"



(EDB, 2022). In a word, the research result and EDB's official guidelines all suggested that the quality of OLE matters, rather than the quantity. However, mainland schools need to ensure the quantity of OLE activity along with good quality, as students still lack opportunities to learn from OLE compared to Hong Kong. Thus, here are some recommendations on how to ensure the quality of OLE activity.

Firstly, Both EDB of Hong Kong and the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China need to specify the Guidelines regarding OLE quality. With the reference to the Seven Guiding Principles of Life-wide Learning on EDB website, one of the principles is 'Emphasising Quality', but it is only illustrated with a simple explanation: "align the experiences students gain from LWL with the learning targets being pursued. Guide students to reflect on what has occurred in the process of LWL and provide quality and timely feedback." (EDB, 2021) It generates three main points - learning objectives and outcomes; guiding students to reflect on the process; provide quality and timely feedback. As for the learning objectives and outcomes, EDB provided are too inclusive and work for all activities. When the schools plan their own OLE activity, they need to make the objectives tailor-made for each activity so that students' learning outcomes would be maximized to a large degree. For the quality reflection, EDB made a brief description that "schools should facilitate students to deepen and consolidate their own learning through quality reflection so as to nurture students' life-long learning capability and foster their whole-person development. In the implementation of OLE" (EDB, 2021). However, how to conduct a quality reflection is not mentioned in the guidelines. Thus, the PWP (pre/while/post activity) model can be adopted to guide students to reflect on the process. In the Pre-activity stage, students can make record of the goals and learning objectives and be better prepared for the next stage. In the while-activity stage, students can reflect on their actions by telling what procedures they have done. And in the post-activity stage, students can reflect on their learning outcomes and space for improvement.

<b>Pre-activity</b>	<b>While Participating</b>	<b>Post-activity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are my goals/objectives</li> <li>- What do I need to prepare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What I did during the activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What I learned/achieved</li> <li>- How can I improve</li> </ul>

Additionally, in order to provide quality and timely feedback during the OLE activity, formative feedback with record for students could be made by the teacher or the responsible group and organizations. The feedback should be constructive, help students improve their performance and stay on track while allowing flexibility at the same time, such as being flexible about students' ideas and catering for the diversity of interests.

Secondly, schools can hold sharing sessions regularly about their experiences in implementing OLE activities. It would be helpful if schools that want to hold similar activities have the reference to others' experiences. Also, related youth development or education-related organizations could provide workshops for schools and teachers. Although there are training sessions provided for teachers on EDB website, they are all related to big topics and themes of different OLE, introducing the related knowledge about the theme. It would be better to provide real OLE activity examples on implementing align with topics. Thirdly, schools could make records for each activity and do quality reflection afterwards to learn from experience; Get feedback from students and teachers so that they can make improvements next time. For instance, according to participants' feedback in this research, schools could select, and design OLE activities based on students' interests, provide hands-on experience to let students learn something new, and always make the activity student-centered.

## **VII. Conclusion**

This research shows that there is no linear relationship between the OLE participation frequency and WPDI Average score. Mainland students have a higher average WPDI than HK students, but it has nothing to do with the participation frequency since HK students have higher participation. This result means mainland students benefit more from their secondary OLE on their whole person development in college although with fewer opportunities. Besides, the quantitative and qualitative research outcomes all shed light on the quality of OLE that matters, rather than the quantity. According to the survey and interview results, secondary school OLE have positive impact on university students' further development in personal characteristics and academic achievement. It helped students to develop their interpersonal relationship skills which benefit them for university study. Also, the standard of a good quality OLE activity focuses on students' needs and interests in diversity. The positive impact on students brought by OLE is significant when ensuring the good quality of OLE activities.



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## Appendix

### Appendix 1- Survey on Secondary School Other Learning Experiences

#### Survey about OLE (Other Learning Experience)

You are invited to participate in a project supervised by Dr LEE Tsz Lok, Trevor, and conducted by Guo Zi Lin, who is a student of the Department of Linguistics and Modern Language Studies in The Education University of Hong Kong.

This study focuses on exploring undergraduate students' perceptions of Other Learning Experience (OLE) gained in the secondary school curriculum and its impacts on students' further development under two different school systems - mainland China and Hong Kong. The advantages, as well as drawbacks of OLE implementations in the two education systems, will be examined.

The study aims to recruit around 40 students who have completed three-year senior secondary school education in a local public secondary school either in mainland China or Hong Kong. *Participants must have at least 2 OLE experiences during their secondary school study.* (You can refer to the text below about the explanation of OLE)

Your participation in the project is voluntary. You have every right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. All information related to you will remain confidential, and will be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher. To ensure anonymity or confidentiality of identifiable data related to research participants involved in the project, permission will be obtained in advance from participants to videotape the interviews, and videos [data] will be destroyed in June after the completing of the research. The research will be published in the form of graduate thesis. The results or data will not be given to any other persons (e.g., shared on an open-science website) or organizations.

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact Guo Zi Lin at telephone number \_\_\_\_\_ or their supervisor LEE Tsz Lok, Trevor at telephone number \_\_\_\_\_.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at [hrec@eduhk.hk](mailto:hrec@eduhk.hk) or by mail to Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

誠邀閣下參加由「李子樂」指導、郭子琳所進行的研究計劃，她是香港教育大學「語言學及現代語言系」的學生。

本研究旨在探討本科生對中學「其他學習經歷」的看法及其對兩種不同學校制度（中國大陸和香港）下大學生「全人發展」的影響。將探討兩個教育體系中「其他學習經歷」實施的優點和缺點。這將討論「其他學習經歷」課程改進的方法。

本研究約招40名在內地或香港接受高中教育的大學生，且參加者在高中須有至少兩段「其他學習經歷」。(關於「其他學習經歷」的解釋可參照下文)

閣下的參與純屬自願性質。閣下享有充分的權利在任何時候決定退出這項研究，更不會因此引致任何不良後果。凡有關閣下的資料將會保密，一切資料的編碼只有研究人員得悉。為了確保參與項目的研究參與者可識別數據的匿名性和機密性，將事先徵得參與者的許可對訪談進行錄像，並在研究完成後於6月份銷毀錄像。該研究將以論文的形式發表。結果或數據不會提供給任何其他人（例如，在開放科學網站上共享）或組織。

如閣下想獲得更多有關這項研究的資料，請與郭子琳聯絡，電話 \_\_\_\_\_ 或聯絡她/他們的導師李子樂，電話 \_\_\_\_\_。

如閣下對這項研究的操守有任何意見，可隨時與香港教育大學人類實驗對象操守委員會聯絡(電郵: [hrec@eduhk.hk](mailto:hrec@eduhk.hk) ; 地址: 香港教育大學研究與發展事務處)。

謝謝閣下有興趣參與這項研究。

\* Required

#### "Other Learning Experience" (OLE) 「其他學習經歷」之解釋：

**For Hong Kong Students:** The Other Learning Experiences ("OLE") is one of the three components of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum that complements core and elective subjects (including Applied Learning and other language Courses) for whole-person development of students. These experiences include: Moral and Civic Education, Community Service, Career-related Experiences, Aesthetic Development and Physical Development. 香港學生：根據新高中課程，「其他學習經歷」是三個組成部分之一，與核心及選修科目(包括應用學習課程)相輔相成，讓學生達至全人發展。經歷包括德育及公民教育、社會服務、與工作有關的經驗、藝術發展和體育發展。

**For students from mainland China:** "OLE" here means the activities your high school organized for you, such as learning after school or on Saturdays, cross-curricular learning days, activities conducted outside classroom or life/environment/aesthetic learning activities. These activities supplement the classroom learning or timetabled lessons of Physical Development, Aesthetic Development and Moral and Civic Education. 大陸學生：「其他學習經歷」在這裏可以指高中為你安排的延伸活動，例如課後/星期六的學習時間表、課堂以外的活動、生命/環境/藝術等學習活動及綜合學習日，以補足體育發展、藝術發展及德育及公民教育的課堂學習。

1. Please tick the box if you agree to participate in this research. 如果您同意參與這項研究，請打勾。\*

Check all that apply.

☐ Yes, I agree. 是的，我同意。

Survey- Part I



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1. What is your area of study in university? 你的大學主修科目是? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) 理工科
- ☐ Arts 文科
- ☐ Others 其他

2. Are you? 你的性別是? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Male 男性
- ☐ Female 女性

3. Where did you receive your senior secondary school education? 在哪里接受了高中教育? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ mainland China 中国大陆
- ☐ Hong Kong 香港

4. a) How many activities for "Other Learning Experience" (OLE) did you participate in your senior secondary school? (You can refer to the explanation about OLE on the previous page). 你在高中參加「其他學習經歷」活動的次數是? (可參考上頁對「其他學習經歷」的解釋) \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 0-1
- ☐ 2-3
- ☐ 4-5
- ☐ 6-7
- ☐ 8-9
- ☐ 10 or more

4. b) How many times in a month, on average, did your senior secondary school organize an OLE activity for you? 你的高中平均一個月舉辦幾次「其他學習經歷」活動? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more



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4. c) Think about one OLE activity that you enjoyed the most, and indicate your choice which best describes it. 請回憶一個你最喜歡的「其他學習經歷」活動，選擇合適的描述選項。 \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Visiting museum 參觀博物館
- ☐ Volunteer service in community 社區服務
- ☐ Sports activity 體貼運動
- ☐ After school club 課後社團
- ☐ Chinese opera workshops / Drama performance 戲劇表演/中國戲曲工作坊
- ☐ Music festival 音樂節
- ☐ Appreciate Your Life 欣賞生命活動教育
- ☐ Life planning programme 生涯規劃
- ☐ Visiting workplaces and universities 參觀不同工作場所及大學
- ☐ Innovation and entrepreneurship competition 創新及創業大賽
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. d) Please simply describe what is the activity about? What did you do?請簡要描述此活動的內容，你做了什麼？

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4. e) Which category (categories) do you think the activity belongs to? (You can choose more than one) 你認為此活動屬於以下哪一類別？ \*

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Moral and Civic Education 德育及公民教育
- ☐ Physical Development 體育發展
- ☐ Community Service 社會服務
- ☐ Aesthetic Development 藝術發展
- ☐ Career-related Experiences 與工作有關的經驗

Survey- Part II

Please read the statements below and indicate your choice which best describes you  
(1- strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3- neutral; 4- agree; 5- strongly agree).  
請閱讀以下陳述並選擇合適的描述選項。(1- 非常不同意; 2- 不同意; 3- 中立; 4- 同意; 5- 非常同意)

5. My senior secondary school OLE helps my spiritual development in university (e.g. art appreciation, moral commitment, spiritual quest) 高中的「其他學習經歷」有助於我大學靈性的養成（藝術欣賞，道德誠信，心靈探求） \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree 非常不同意	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree 非常同意



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6. My senior secondary school OLE helps my intellectual development in university (e.g. intellectual capacity) 高中的「其他學習經歷」有助於我知性的養成（博學明思） \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree 非常不同意	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree 非常同意

7. My senior secondary school OLE helps my physical development in university (e.g. health maintenance, physical fitness) 高中的「其他學習經歷」有助於我的體能發展（健康生活，體能運動） \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree 非常不同意	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree 非常同意

8. My senior secondary school OLE helps my professional development in university (e.g. career preparation, leadership) 高中的「其他學習經歷」有助於我的專業發展（職前準備，領導才能） \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree 非常不同意	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree 非常同意

9. My senior secondary school OLE helps my psychological development in university (e.g. emotional health, self appreciation) 高中的「其他學習經歷」有助於我的心理發展（情緒健康，自我欣賞） \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree 非常不同意	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree 非常同意

10. My senior secondary school OLE helps my social development in university (e.g. civic responsibility, community care, cultural engagement, family relationship, peer relationship) 高中的「其他學習經歷」有助於提高我的社群意識（公民責任，社區關懷，文化交流，家庭關係，朋輩關係） \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree 非常不同意	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree 非常同意

Thank you for your participation 感謝閣下的參與

Would you like to participate in a 20 minutes Zoom interview to share more about your views on secondary school OLE? 你願意參加一個20分鐘的Zoom採訪來分享你關於高中「其他學習經歷」更多的見解嗎？ \*

Mark only one oval.



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If yes, please leave your email address or WhatsApp below. Thank you! 如果願意參加，請在此留下你的電郵地址或 WhatsApp，感謝！

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## Appendix 2- Interview Questions

1. Have you done all the areas of OLE activities?
2. Which kind of OLE did you spend the most time on? Or you spent average time on each domain?  
( Moral and Civic Education; Physical Development, Aesthetic Development; Community Service; Career-related Experiences)
3. Compare the time you spend on your academic learning and OLE school arranged for you, do you think the time allocation is reasonable?
4. Do you wish to have more OLE opportunities in secondary school?
5. What kind of OLE activities do you want your secondary school to hold more? Why?
6. Do you have Freedom of choice? If not, do you wish so?
7. Do you think your secondary school OLE helped your personal development in college life? In terms of personal characteristics. (moral/humanistic values; Interpersonal relationship; critical thinking)
8. Do you think your secondary school OLE helped your personal development in college life? In terms of academic performance. (Learning motivation; Leadership in group work; Self-regulation)
9. Other benefits you think secondary OLE brought to you in university study?
10. What kinds of skills or knowledge do you wish to get through secondary school OLE so that you would perform better in university?
11. How do you define a good OLE activity?
12. Suggestions for the local secondary schools about OLE.



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