

Evaluating the IVElite Programme to Empower VET Students

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IVElite, a new initiative launched in AY 2010/11, is a peer-mentorship programme that employs an outcome-based education approach to assessment. Structured training, individual and group coaching and exchange programmes were provided to the IVElite participants to enhance the readiness of students to embark on their future careers through honing students' attitudes, values and learning skills.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, three focus groups were conducted with sixteen IVElite participants in 2012. The discussions were audio taped, transcribed and analysed. Recurrent themes related to IVElite and perceived values were highlighted. In addition to focus group interview, 262 IVElite and 307 non-IVElite participants were invited to complete surveys assessing the corresponding IVElite's attributes:

- (1) Personal growth
- (2) Self-empowerment
- (3) Self-regulation
- (4) Autonomy and
- (5) Interpersonal skills.

Except for personal growth, other attributes consist of various sub domains. Self-empowerment access participants' sociopolitical controls, namely their leadership competence and policy control. Self-regulation aims to look at students' selective election and loss as well as optimisation and compensation when making task choice or priority. Autonomy, as suggested, aims to investigate the independence of individuals, looking at their attitudinal, emotional and functional autonomies. Interpersonal skills possess five sub domains namely examine ones' initiation, negative assertion, disclosure, emotional support and conflict management.

Based on focus group findings, most participants enjoyed the programme and thought that it helped them to develop various types of transferrable skills. Although a few participants encountered a hard time during the programme, all of them favoured the programme both for themselves and for future students.

Interpersonal skills moderately correlated across all attributes, making it the most stable predicting factor across all other IVElite's attributes. The level of personal growth; self-empowerment; autonomy and interpersonal skills are significantly higher in IVElite participants. When looking at subdomains, IVElite participants scored significantly higher than non-IVElite in leadership competence, policy control, loss-based selection, optimisation, compensation, emotional autonomy, functional autonomy, initiation, emotional support and conflict management. Results indicated that the IVElite programme could help participants to attain the learning outcomes and with the expected attributes. However, the programme may need to put more effort to assist participants in priority task selection and attitude toward negative or emotional situations (negative assertion and disclosure).

Within the IVElite participants (namely, senior mentors, mentors, and mentees), there is no statistical significant difference in any domain between senior mentors and mentors, indicating that senior mentors and mentors did not perform differently after they acquired their skills in the programme. Experiences through time did not make any differences in their performance indicating that performance was able to maintain consistency through time. All mentors (senior mentors and mentors) scored significantly higher than mentee and non-IVElite participants across all domains. Results indicate that non-IVElite participants and mentee performed similarly, which is not surprising since mentees had only began the program for a short period of time.

Most participants welcomed and favoured joining the IVElite programme. Results confirmed that IVElite programme was effective in cultivating students' attributes. The results of this study indicates that the IVElite programme can be an integral part of vocational education and training to help students in personal, academic and career aspects. Further studies could be conducted to strengthen the IVElite programme and clarify the psychological links between IVElite, personal resources, academic performance, career choice and quality of life.

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