

# Students' Holistic Competencies in Chinese Private Colleges

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## Abstract

**The Chinese society attach great importance to education and invest a lot of resources to support and develop education. Education is regarded as the future of the country and society, so it has received wide attention and support. The core task of higher education is to build up moral character, to strengthen the holistic competencies of students and to cultivate talents who contribute to the country and society. Based on the characteristics of private schools in China, this paper expounds how to assess the holistic competencies of students. The definition of various concepts is mentioned in this article: Background of holistic competencies, definition of holistic competencies terms, holistic competencies in Chinese Private Colleges, and conclusion.**

## Keywords

**Holistic Competencies; Higher Education; Chinese Private Colleges.**

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the landscape of higher education in China has undergone significant transformations, marked by an increasing emphasis on holistic education and the development of well-rounded competencies among students. This shift is driven by a recognition that traditional academic assessments alone may not adequately prepare students for the complex challenges of the modern world. As a result, educators and institutions are grappling with the question of whether to assess holistic competencies, and if so, how to effectively implement such assessments.

Higher education institutions are increasingly challenged to demonstrate their social and economic relevance through their third mission, namely effective university-enterprise partnerships (Jongbloed & Zomer, 2012) [1]. As a result of this close link with industry, the generic skills agenda and employability agenda have influenced the way higher education is judged and held accountable for its expected outcomes (Matherly & Tillman, 2015; Moore & Morton, 2017) [2]. Such outcomes are often articulated as graduate attributes, generic skills, holistic competencies, core skills, soft skills, transferable skills, key competencies, generic competencies, or employability skills (Barrie, 2006; Chan & Yeung, 2019; Chapman & O'Neill, 2010). Many of these competencies are also essential life skills which enable students to function effectively and responsibly as global citizens and members of society (Barrie, 2004). In this paper, the term "holistic competencies" is used as an umbrella term inclusive of different types of holistic skills (such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, creativity, and time management), positive values and attitudes (such as consideration, respect, appreciation, and lifelong learning) for student development (Chan, Fong, Luk, & Ho, 2017, Chan & Luo, 2020, Chan & Yeung, 2021, Chan & Luk, 2020) [3].

Recognition of holistic competency attainment refers to the acknowledgment and validation of an individual's development and mastery of a comprehensive set of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and attributes that extend beyond traditional academic achievements. This recognition can come from educational institutions, employers, professional organizations, and society at large. It signifies that an individual has successfully cultivated a well-rounded skill set that equips

them for success in various aspects of life, including personal, academic, and professional domains.

Holistic competency (HC) is an umbrella term for different types of generic skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving skills), positive values, and attitudes (e.g., resilience, appreciation for others) which are essential for students' life-long learning and whole-person development (Chan, Fong, Luk, & Ho, 2017; Chan & Yeung, 2019). With increasing emphasis being placed on holistic competencies, the quality of higher education is primarily judged by whether its students have gained the necessary competencies and the extent to which such competencies have been developed upon graduation (Chapman & O'Neill, 2010). However, in practice the development of holistic competencies is often embedded within a program of study and signified by the award of a final degree (Warn & Tranter, 2001). In other words, students' achievement of specific competencies is not documented separately but rather "embedded in a larger piece of assessment" (Bath, Smith, Stein, & Swann, 2004, p. 315). Hence, their achievement of these competencies and levels of performance tend to go unrecognized[4].

In the education sector, recognition of achievements concerns processes and methods for acknowledging the attainment of educational outcomes or outstanding performance based on some form of assessment. Recognition of holistic competencies carries immense significance for three groups of stakeholders: students, employers, and tertiary institutions[5]. For students, formal credentials such as official transcripts and certifications serve as evidence of competence that they can present to future employers (Bers, 2001) and documentation of prior learning for their lifelong learning agenda (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009). This type of recognition is "immediate, portable evidence of the outcomes of their investments in higher education" (Wilson, Miles, Baker, & Schoenberger, 2000, p. 53). For employers, the credentials indicate to them whether a potential employee possesses the required competencies for effective participation in the workplace (Paulson, 2001), whereas for tertiary institutions such documentation of student achievement is utilized in measuring educational outcomes for quality assurance purposes (Bers, 2001).

## 2. Methodology

Researchers used qualitative method in this paper. The key words searched in this article were managerial competencies and job performance. First, search for literature, documents and articles related to managerial competencies and job performance through Google and major databases. Then, the theories, concepts and related studies were reviewed and analyzed. Then, Analyzed the factors that affect the overall ability of college students. Finally, the strategies to improve the overall abilities of students in private universities was proposed.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Definition of Holistic Competency Terms

Competency is a concept proposed by McClelland from a psychological perspective in 1973(McClelland D C,1973).Since the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development launched the "Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundation" in December 1997, reports on Key Competencies were released in 2003 and 2005 respectively, guiding education in the 21st century. In March 2010, the Singapore Ministry of Education issued the 21st Century Competencies for students. Holistic competency (HC) is an umbrella term for different types of generic skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving skills), positive values, and attitudes (e.g., resilience, appreciation for others) which are essential for students' life-long learning and whole-person development (Chan, Fong, Luk, & Ho, 2017; Chan & Yeung, 2019). It should be noted that we do not wish to claim a

dichotomous divide between disciplinary knowledge and HCs as it is not always possible to clearly separate these two terms in student learning (e.g., the acquisition of engineering technique may also require generic problem-solving skills). What we aim to emphasize in this paper is that, HC as an umbrella term, represents those competencies that can 'potentially be applied to a wide range of disciplines, to different workplaces, and to any other contexts' [6].

Holistic competency refers to a comprehensive set of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and attributes that individuals develop to excel in various aspects of their personal, academic, and professional lives. It encompasses a well-rounded skill set that goes beyond traditional academic achievements and enables individuals to navigate complex challenges and contribute meaningfully to society.

### 3.2. The Importance of Holistic Competency

Holistic competency holds significant importance in modern society and the professional landscape. It goes beyond traditional academic achievements and encompasses a wide range of abilities required for individual success across various domains[7]. The following are the key reasons highlighting the importance of holistic competency:

First one is Comprehensive Development. Holistic competency nurtures diverse abilities in individuals, including cognitive, skills, emotional, and social aspects. This contributes to a well-rounded development of individuals across academic, professional, and personal realms. And the adapting to Complex Challenges. In a rapidly changing and complex societal and professional environment, holistic competency enables individuals to better adapt to new situations, solve problems, and face challenges, resulting in greater success. Also the innovation and Problem-Solving. Holistic competency fosters innovative thinking and problem-solving skills. Individuals can approach issues from multiple angles, find novel solutions, and achieve innovation across different fields. Collaboration and Teamwork, holistic competency emphasizes collaboration and cooperation with others. Strong communication, teamwork, and leadership skills enable individuals to collaborate more effectively and achieve shared goals. Navigating Multiculturalism: Holistic competency cultivates global awareness and cross-cultural communication skills. This allows individuals to work and interact in different cultures and international settings, better adapting to global trends. Career Competitiveness: Holistic competency enhances an individual's career competitiveness. Employers seek candidates with well-rounded skills because they can better adapt to job requirements and bring greater value to teams and organizations. Personal Growth and Well-Being: Holistic competency contributes to personal growth and well-being. Traits like emotional intelligence, ethical values, and emotional awareness aid in building healthy relationships, managing emotions, and enhancing life satisfaction. Lifelong Learning and Adaptation: Holistic competency develops an individual's learning and adaptation abilities, enabling them to continuously update knowledge and skills to keep up with the rapidly changing knowledge economy.

In summary, holistic competency plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals and fostering success[8]. Its impact spans across individual, educational, professional, and societal levels, contributing to comprehensive development and thriving in an ever-evolving world.

### 3.3. Holistic Competency in Chinese Private Colleges

In Chinese private colleges, holistic competency is a key educational philosophy and practice aimed at fostering students' well-rounded development and equipping them with the abilities to adapt to diverse societal and vocational demands. It includes student comprehensive development, practical orientation, practical orientation, practical orientation, interpersonal communication, etc. Chinese private colleges emphasize that students not only need academic knowledge, but also need to develop skills, emotional intelligence, and social skills. And encourage students to cultivate their critical thinking, comprehensive analysis, and problem-

solving abilities through interdisciplinary learning. Private colleges typically collaborate with industries to provide practical work experience and help students better adapt to the demands of the job market. In summary, holistic competency in Chinese private colleges is a significant educational objective, aiming to produce graduates with diverse skills, comprehensive qualities, and adaptability. This contributes to their success in their careers and meaningful contributions to society.

The investigation into holistic competencies among students in these institutions has revealed several key insights and implications[9]. The research underscores the importance of holistic competency as a comprehensive approach to education that goes beyond traditional academic pursuits. Chinese private colleges have recognized the significance of nurturing well-rounded individuals equipped with a diverse range of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and attributes. This recognition reflects a shift in educational paradigms toward producing graduates who are adaptable, innovative, and capable of thriving in the dynamic modern landscape.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the role of practical-oriented learning experiences, interdisciplinary approaches, and opportunities for personal growth in fostering holistic competencies. The emphasis on real-world applications, experiential projects, and exposure to diverse disciplines contributes to the development of students' critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and effective communication skills.

The study also underscores the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and industries. Private colleges are collaborating with various sectors to provide students with practical experiences, preparing them for the demands of the professional world. This approach not only enhances students' employability but also facilitates a smoother transition from academia to the workforce.

#### 4. Conclusion and Future Work

In conclusion, the exploration of students' holistic competencies in Chinese private colleges highlights the forward-thinking nature of these institutions and their commitment to producing graduates who are not only academically proficient but also possess the versatile skills and qualities necessary for success in today's interconnected and rapidly changing world. As these colleges continue to refine their approaches to education, the cultivation of holistic competencies will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in shaping the future leaders and contributors of society.

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