

Project Title : A collaborative forum for the enhancement of social work practicum education in Hong Kong

Leading University : City University of Hong Kong

Participating UGC-funded University(ies) : The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The University of Hong Kong

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Layman Summary of Proposal

In view of the lack of coordination and low degree of transparency in the provision of social work practicum education in various institutions, combined with the lack of exchange and collaboration between local and overseas social work institutions, the project aims to establish links between local and overseas institutions, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and practices related to the issues and trends of practicum education, and incorporate international trends and practices into local social work education via an international conference, theme-based local institutional seminars and an e-forum. Objectives of the project are –

1. To review existing practices and assess the pros and cons of practicum models in various institutions within Hong Kong, so as to improve transparency;
2. To learn from the best practices of overseas and local institutions that excel in practicum education;
3. To explore a collaborative learning fieldwork practicum model in Hong Kong, thus developing innovative, best practices; and
4. To facilitate the ongoing discussion and exchange of knowledge, information and experiences amongst educational institutions and social welfare agencies worldwide.

The international conference will cover the following themes: supervision models, fieldwork supervision and practicum education, student learning and outstanding student projects, collaboration of various stakeholders including social welfare agencies, teachers and students, cultural sensitivity and fieldwork practicum, assessment and evaluation in fieldwork practicum, use of technology in practicum education, internationalization of practicum education. Renowned overseas experts and local experts will be invited to present in the conference.

Local seminars will be held in various institutions to discuss the effectiveness of practicum teaching and learning through the incorporation of international trends and practices. Teachers, students from different academic institutions and professionals from social welfare agencies will be invited to participate in the seminars to explore a collaborative fieldwork practicum learning model in Hong Kong.

The e-forum will comprise four sections, namely, the Practice Forum, Supervision Forum, Research Forum and Career in the Helping Professions Forum, covering former students' practicum work and records, instructors' supervision practices, research ideas related to practicum learning and teaching, and guidance for students on developing their professional identities and careers in the helping professions, respectively.

Sustainability of the project will be attained by incorporating a collaborative learning fieldwork model in practicum education, continuous exchange of new information and innovative practices via the e-forum, and organisation of international conferences and local seminars in the future.

Layman Summary of Final Report

The project aimed to enhance social work practicum education through –

1. Learning from the best practices of overseas and local institutions that excel in practicum education;
2. Reviewing existing practices and assess the pros and cons of practicum models in various institutions within Hong Kong;
3. Exploring a collaborative learning fieldwork practicum model in Hong Kong; and
4. Facilitating the ongoing discussion and exchange of knowledge, information and experiences amongst educational institutions and social welfare agencies

worldwide.

To achieve these objectives, an international conference, theme-based local institutional seminars and an e-forum were held. The three universities (City University of Hong Kong (CityU), The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and The University of Hong Kong (HKU)) collaborated in planning, designing and implementing the e-forum, as well as organizing the international conference and seminars.

The International Conference on Discovery and Innovation in Social Work Practicum Education was held on 20-21 May, 2015 in the CityU. Over 200 participants from the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, Mainland China, and Hong Kong joined in the conference. The international conference invited worldwide renowned scholars to deliver keynote speeches as well as local and overseas researchers and practitioners to make presentations on various topics related to practicum education. The participants commented that the conference was informative and insightful, and it provided a good platform for them to exchange knowledge with different countries' students and teachers.

Three theme-based seminars were held by CityU, CUHK and HKU respectively during 2015-16. Over one hundred fieldwork instructors from local universities attended the seminars. The seminars were conducted by experienced social work educators and field instructors who guided participating fieldwork instructors to reflect on their supervision process with students and discuss how to discover and innovate in facilitating students' learning process. The seminars were well-received among the participants. The participants agreed that the seminars provided practical information as well as thought-provoking ideas related to practicum education. They also appreciated that the seminars served as communication platform among the field instructors.

The e-forum PraED (<http://www.pra-ed.org/>) was launched in September 2015. The social work students in the three universities posted and discussed their questions related to the practicum. The teaching staff responded to the questions and promoted quality posts during the discussion. Through the above-stated activities, the project's four objectives have been achieved to a great extent.

In addition, the project has led to further collaboration among the faculty members of the three universities. We will continue to organise similar conferences and workshops

for students, teachers and social welfare agency staff in the future. Sustainability is maintained as the e-forum can be updated and operated with minimal maintenance costs.