Project Title :   A Student-Tutor Writing Consultation Programme and Inter-institutional Writing Consultation Support System

Leading University :   The University of Hong Kong

Participating UGC-funded   City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist
University(ies) :   University

Project Leader(s) :   Mr Samuel Francis COLE III, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Applied English Studies, Faculty of Arts, The University of Hong Kong

Summary of Proposal

Hong Kong universities assist their students in acquiring English writing skills necessary for successful participation in academic and workplace communication mainly through core English courses, and supplementary writing support services offered by writing tutors in the advisory zones. However, owing to the increasingly high demand for writing assistance and limited manpower, writing tutors can only address smaller-scale writing issues in walked-in texts. In view of the inadequacy, this project proposes a one-on-one, face-to-face Student Tutor Writing Consultation Programme to complement the existing English writing support services on campus. An inter-institutional English writing support system will be formed, followed by various collaborative activities to sustain the new initiative.

The objective of the proposed project is twofold. First, it aims to provide a wide-scale cost-effective writing assistance programme on campus staffed by a group of selected and trained student tutors, shadowed by project staff. Second, it will also provide online and offline resources to support tutors, tutees, and faculty teachers with regard to issues in student writing

To achieve these aims, a group of faculty recommended/self-nominated student tutors with strong English communication skills will be selected. Training courses and a student tutor manual will be provided to selected student tutors to maintain the consistency and the quality of tutor-tutee consultations. Trained student tutors will be shadowed by project team members. In addition, an e-teaching-and-learning platform

that showcases collaborative work and the programme will be developed. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be in place to regulate the quality and effectiveness of the programme at different implementation stages.

The project will not only meet the writing needs of a greater number of students, but will also foster trained student tutors' whole personal growth. Student tutors will benefit from the formal interactive experience of tutoring, and the meaningful use of their language knowledge. Students who attend consultations will discuss their texts with trained student tutors, who will act as writing mentors. Inter-institutional collaborative activities will support the new initiative, resulting in a productive synergy. Consequently, a peer assistance culture and a writing support network between local universities will be developed to sustain the project.

Summary of Final Report

Hong Kong universities assist their students in acquiring English writing skills necessary for successful participation in academic and workplace communication mainly through core English courses, and supplementary writing support services offered by writing tutors in advisory zones. However, owing to the increasingly high demand for writing assistance and limited manpower, writing tutors traditionally could only address smaller-scale writing issues in walked-in texts. In view of this inadequacy, this project delivered a one-on-one, face-to-face Student Tutor Writing Consultation Programme to complement the existing English writing support services on campus. An inter-institutional English writing support system was formed, followed by various collaborative activities to sustain the new initiative.

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To achieve these aims, a group of faculty recommended/self-nominated student tutors with strong English communication skills were selected. Initial and ongoing training were provided to selected student tutors to ensure the consistency and quality of tutor-tutee consultations. Trained student tutors were shadowed by project team members. In addition, an online consultation system that allowed management of booking and collection of data to showcase the achievements of the program was created. Rigorous

monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were used to regulate the quality and effectiveness of the programme at different implementation stages. Tutee feedback demonstrates that peer tutors play a key intermediary role between student writers and the teachers of their university courses.

The project not only met the writing needs of a greater number of students, but also fostered trained student tutors' whole personal growth. Student tutors benefited from the formal interactive experience of tutoring, and the meaningful use of their language knowledge. Students who attended consultations discussed their texts with trained student tutors, often from disciplines matching the student's course of study. Inter-institutional collaborative activities supported the new initiative, resulting in a productive synergy. Consequently, a peer assistance culture and a writing support network between local universities was developed to sustain the project, and peer tutoring programs will continue to be implemented at The University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Baptist University. Many tutors will carry their expertise into secondary and tertiary-level teaching roles.