

Project Title : Transforming Internship for Transformative Learning and Reciprocal Knowledge Transfer between University and Workplace

Leading University : The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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

Project Leader(s) : Dr Robert WRIGHT, Associate Professor, Department of Management & Marketing, Faculty of Business, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Summary of Proposal

Real world learning provides an important complement to classroom learning. As such, internships provide an opportunity for our students to apply their university education to the complexities of real-world problems, issues and challenges in a given organizational context. Yet, how much of our university education is effectively transferred into the workplace and make a difference to organizations facing these challenges? Just as importantly, how much of the students' internship experience is brought back into the classroom environment in a structured and systematic way so that this iterative process fosters deeper learning and re-examination of the underlying assumptions that drive our theories, models and teaching methods, and in the process better prepares our students for a complicated world? This three (3) year Teaching and Learning grant proposal aims to provide the impetus to change the way UGC funded tertiary institutions view student internships by requiring students to document evidence-based examples of specific applications of what they learned at school to Problem-based Learning work-assignments during their internships. This reflective practice is then directly tied back to the classroom environment where such discussions and sharing is assessed as part of the individual student's subject grade. This bridging of the "knowing-doing" gap will also engage teachers with a view to "teach for knowledge transfer". To facilitate the importance of this iterative process in a structured and measurable way, provide students with a framework (called "Staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D.") developed and successfully tested with students over a seven-year period (by the project leader at PolyU) which has helped students learn better, faster

and more than they are currently used to when dealing with complex problems, issues and challenges. Five UGC funded universities have all agreed to take part with financial backing to this proposed project. We also have the support of Harvard Business School, Northeastern University and the University of Toronto on board to share their international experience with student internships. Using Kurt Lewin's Model of Change, we plan our three-year project framed around Unfreezing-Change-Refreezing. Our key stakeholders will be students, teachers, internship coordinators, employers and the institutions that guide them.

Summary of Final Report

Real world learning provides an important complement to classroom learning. Generally, universities are great at imparting "content" but not too good at putting that content into "context". As such, internships provide an opportunity for our students to apply their university education to the complexities of real-world problems, issues and challenges (ranging in difficulty levels) across multiple situated organizational contexts. Yet, how much of our university education is effectively transferred into the workplace and make a difference to organizations facing these challenges? Just as importantly, how much of the students' internship experience is brought back into the classroom environment in a structured and systematic way so that this iterative process fosters deeper learning and the re-examination of the underlying assumptions that drive our theories, models and teaching methods, and in the process better prepares our students for a complicated world? This three (3) year UGC funded Teaching and Learning project aimed to provide the impetus to change the way tertiary institutions view student internships by requiring students to document evidence-based examples of specific applications of what they learned at school to high-impact shorter engaged problem-based learning projects during multiple internship placements. This reflective practice is then directly tied back to the classroom environment where such discussions and sharing is assessed as part of the individual student's subject grade. This bridging of the "knowing-doing" gap will also engage teachers with a view to "teach for knowledge transfer" and "transfer of learning". To facilitate the importance of this iterative process in a structured and measurable way, we grounded our work on a pedagogical innovation (called "F.O.C.U.S.E.D.") developed and successfully tested with students over a 10-year period (by the project leader at PolyU). FOCUSED has helped students learn better, faster and more than they are currently used to when dealing with the unknown, rare and novel events and situations. Five UGC funded universities collaborated in this 3-year project. Support was also received from Harvard Business School, Northeastern University and the University of Toronto in sharing their experience with placements.

Our key stakeholders were students, teachers, internship coordinators, employers and the institutions that guide them. Our project designed an entire ecosystem that provides a complementary alternative to existing work integrated education arrangements. We grounded our work from Harvard's FIELD Method, MIT Professor Donald Schön's Reflective Practice and the pedagogy of staying FOCUSED in better preparing our students for a complicated world.