

Experiential Learning and Innovations in Professional Education – Interdisciplinary Roundtable (Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine)

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To give you a little background, of course, as we all know that in Hong Kong, since the Education Reform in 2012, students extend a year in the university. We believe the initiative is good for medical students because there's so much to learn in medicine. That we should use this year to enhance our students' learning experience and broaden their horizons.

Being a doctor of course requires multiple qualities. We need them to be someone who know about medicine; and someone who can communicate with patients, nurses, other co-workers etc. They should be humanist and advocates for health. They need to be manager for resources so that we don't always use the most expensive drugs, for example. We also need to make sure that person continues to learn, because medicine changes all the time. So one of the things that we ask ourselves was, how could we actually make use of this one year to allow our students to learn these qualities. So around 2016, we decided to make this one year as a form of enrichment experience for our students and subsequently introduced the "Enrichment Year" curriculum. I believe this is actually the first time any medical school in the world has done it. This is not the gap year which many universities or medical schools are doing. This year is supposed to be credit-bearing. We give our students a lot of freedom to pick what to do, but we also limit the themes we feel that can enhance the said qualities. So we allow students to engage in research or in different aspects of medicine; we encourage our students to work in the community to provide services to others as a form of service-learning. We also encourage them to learn beyond medicine, to enroll themselves in non-medical courses. So these are the three things that we provide our students to engage in. We allow our students to make up the whole programme; we allow them to directly approach teachers; to enroll in established courses of other degree programmes, etc. We also encourage our academics to help supervise the students' research.

Within this year, 210 students will leave the medical school. Soon there will be more. This year we have admitted 265 students and in a few years we are going to send out all these students of the Faculty of Medicine. So our question is that how we are going to support our students psychologically, socially, as well as academically when they are out of the medical school. How do our students learn actually? We allow them to spend time in at least one or up to two themes that I've just mentioned. So the students have a lot to learn, and we need to think how to get students to learn from each other. We have therefore set up a platform called "Connect*ed". It basically uses the Facebook interface and allows people to communicate with each other. Within Connect*ed, we actually have a big group of the whole class, a platform which allows students to share and know who each other are doing, and to receive the messages from the Faculty, etc. We also have Connect*ed Mentors. We assign 10 to 11 students to each of the tutor (mentor). We intentionally mix the students, putting students working in different themes into the same group. So students in theme one would learn from those in theme two, theme three, etc. And the tutors would be able to provide guidance to the students with the help of the lecturers, assistant professors, etc of our medical education unit to maintain the platform. We also link this platform with our own Portal for the purpose of our student assessment. So students would have to submit their mid-term reports, and reports at the end of the semester or end of the year, etc. We are able to pick up evaluation data from our students. The first group of students, admitted in 2016, became year three in 2018 and came back in June of this year. At the end of the Enrichment Year, we held a very big education gathering. All 210 students presented their own experiences from work, either individually or as a group. We also collected feedback from students in terms of effectiveness, usefulness and friendliness of this workplace platform. As far as I understand, the feedback has been very positive.

I think I'll just stop here. The things that we encourage our students to do are very similar to the presentations we just heard. They actually share in the programme and have active two-flow communication from students working, e.g. in Cambodia serving the blind, to discuss research programme with students working within the Faculty, etc. It's very dynamic and useful, and we will continue to use it, and hopefully we will have more to share in the future.