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LEARNING EXCELLENCE

Enhancing first-year transition through a student-centred, non-credit bearing co-curricular program

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Presentation Outline

A. Background and Purpose

B. Experiential Learning Activities

C. Evaluation

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PROJECT'S BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

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A. Project's Background

- 1. Public Opinions:** how people feel about today's fresh graduates in Hong Kong
- 3. CityU's Data:** learning motivation in students as revealed in LASSI scores



A. Project's Background

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1. Public Opinions

a) *International Labor Survey*: Employers think **fresh grads, despite having a Bachelor's degree, cannot perform satisfactorily at work**. Employers want employees with good English language skills, self-management skills, interpersonal communication skills ("University graduates lack moral characters," 2006).

University graduates lack moral characters and integrity; employers' opinions. (2006, July 28). *Hong Kong Economy Daily* (in Chinese). Retrieved from <http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/features/uranking/2006press1.html>

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A. Project's Background

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1. Public Opinions

b) Some employers indicated that **today's young people lacked a sense of responsibility and integrity**, calling in sick to look for other jobs, withholding information, lying to customers and employers ("University graduates lack moral characters and integrity," 2006).

University graduates lack moral characters and integrity; employers' opinions. (2006, July 28). *Hong Kong Economy Daily* (in Chinese). Retrieved from <http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/features/uranking/2006press1.html>

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A. Project's Background

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2. CityU's Data

- Results from the **Learning And Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI)** administered by CityU's Education Development Office in 2008 showed that freshmen scored **low on Motivation** ("diligence, self-discipline, and willingness in learning"), which was slightly below the 40th percentile (Kwong, 2008).

Kwong, T. (2008). *How can LASSI help you?* [PowerPoint Presentation]. Education Development Office, City University of Hong Kong.

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A. Project's Background


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Conclusion:

- University education is *not just* to teach technical/academic knowledge/skills *but also* to **nurture transferrable core competencies**. The development of good **personal and interpersonal qualities** are essential to prepare students well for the world of work.
- Ways to **enhance motivation** can be done by **enriching their learning experience and environment**—making it *enjoyable and meaningful*.


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A. Project's Purpose

- Department of Applied Social Studies (SS) utilizes its own resources to launch a **student-centred, non-credit bearing co-curricular program**, called **Project X: Learning Excellence** in 2008
- **3 Project Officers** are hired to plan and implement the project, together with **1 Research Assistant** to carry out the project evaluation
- **Target all SS undergraduates (studying Social Work, Psychology and Applied Sociology)**, serving more than **400 students** every year




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A. Project's Purpose

- **Project X: Learning Excellence** designed to foster **growth and development** in students (particularly year-1) in 4 areas:
 - 1) Personal,**
 - 2) Interpersonal,**
 - 3) Academic,**
 - 4) Professional.**



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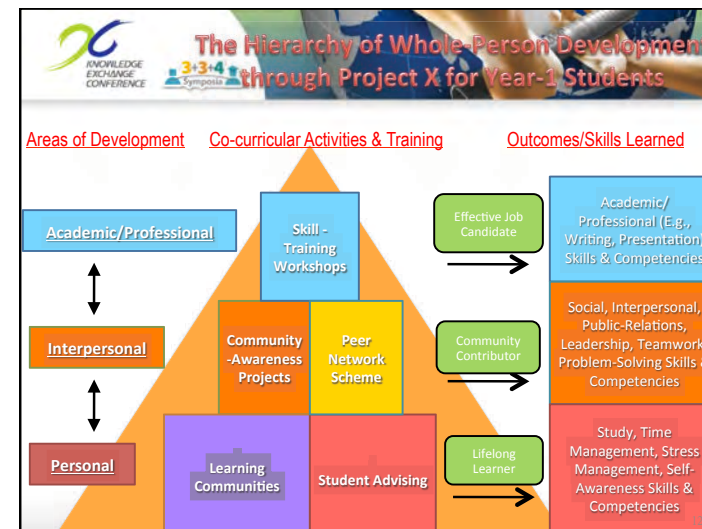
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A. Project's Purpose

- ... focuses on 3 main objectives:
 - 1) To establish a network of support with peers, mentors, alumni and teachers**
 - 2) To foster better first year transition**
 - 3) To facilitate learning enhancement**
- so that they may become ...
 - **Lifelong learners**
 - **Community contributors**
 - **Competitive future job candidates**



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PROJECT'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES



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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities

- Project X implemented *five types of co-curricular activities and training in 2011-2012* namely:
 - 1. Small Group Program-specific Learning Communities,**
 - 2. Academic Skills Training Workshops,**
 - 3. Student-initiated, Discovery-oriented Community-Awareness Projects,**
 - 4. Student Advising,**
 - 5. Peer Network Scheme.**



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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities

1. Small Group Program-specific Learning Communities



To foster social support, open exchange and self-reflection

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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities

1. Small Group Program-specific Learning Communities

- Each learning community of 15-20 students (grouped by program) meets regularly to **foster mutual support** among each other and **exchange information and ideas on learning and self-management strategies.**
- Topics includes: **Planning Ahead for University Challenges, Goal Setting, Time Management, and Study Skills,** etc.


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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities

2. Academic Skills Training Workshops



To provide students with *interactive learning* opportunities to acquire competencies in *self-awareness, relationship building, and academic skills* through *small group discussion, sharing and role-play*.

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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities

2. Academic Skills Training Workshops

- Workshops include a wide range of topics covering **writing skills, presentation skills, and learning strategies**.
- Project X staff **collaborate with other SS teaching staff** (e.g., year coordinators, foundation team members) in designing and delivering workshops' contents and learning objectives.

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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities

3. Student-initiated, Discovery-oriented Community-Awareness Projects



To connect *academic learning with community issues*

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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities

3. Student-initiated, Discovery-oriented Community-Awareness Projects

- **Community-awareness projects** encourage students to **understand the needs of specific communities** and **devise programs to bring people's awareness** to the small voices of such communities.
- E.g. *3-3-4 Symposium, Equal Opportunity Project*, etc.

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3. Student-initiated, Discovery-oriented Community-Awareness Projects

3-3-4 Symposium

- A group of Year 2 Social Work and Applied Sociology students organized a **drug abuse project** with KSS Kei Sang Secondary School (KSS) students from 2009 to 2010.



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3. Student-initiated, Discovery-oriented Community-Awareness Projects

3-3-4 Symposium

- They then took the initiative to empower KSS students to launch a project on a **3-3-4 education reform**. Under SS students' guidance and coach, a youth conference was successful held at CityU. It was attended by around **200 secondary students** from different schools, discussing the impacts of the 3-3-4 education reform. Distinguished guests were invited to listen to students' presentations, including 2 LegCo members.
- SS students learned how to be leaders, and acquired strategies to motivate and support other people.

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3. Student-initiated, Discovery-oriented Community-Awareness Projects

Equal Opportunity Project

- A group of 24 SS students of different years and majors took the initiative in 2010 to collaborate with a social enterprise (SE) on car-washing run by Hong Kong Stewards, a NGO, to launch the **"Equal Opportunity Project"**. The SE aims at empowering and providing job opportunities to ex-mentally ill patients.



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3. Student-initiated, Discovery-oriented Community-Awareness Projects

Equal Opportunity Project

- SS students observed the work of the car-washing teams, video-tape the workers' daily work, talk with them to understand their work and life, and the discrimination they maybe facing.
- When later it was decided to hold a variety show, SS students discussed with the workers the themes and presentation of the variety show, the scripts and performance, and undertake several rounds of rehearsals together.



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3. Student-initiated, Discovery-oriented Community-Awareness Projects

Equal Opportunity Project

- The project was rounded off with a **multi-media variety show** successfully held at CityU.
- Through various strategies, e.g. video-clips and narra-drama and self-reflections, SS students collaborated with workers of the car-washing teams to promote the message of anti-discrimination and equal job opportunities to the community.
- It was very well attended by around **300 participants**, including students, service users of NGOs, and the general public.

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3. Student-initiated, Discovery-oriented Community-Awareness Projects

Equal Opportunity Project

- SS students learned more about discrimination: e.g. possible discrimination facing ex-mentally ill people, discrimination they themselves maybe subjected to (e.g. age), discrimination they unintentionally hold against other people etc..
- They also appreciated the potentials and strengths of the workers. They firmly believe that we are all equal!

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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities


4. Student Advising



To understand students' needs and coach students on goal-setting through individual/group consultation

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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities

4. Student Advising

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- All first-year students are encouraged to meet up with Project X staff twice a year to **seek advice on academic studies and whole-personal development.**
- Academic concern:** formulating study goals and developing study plans, making decision on selection of major and minor, application of scholarships, etc.
- Whole-personal development:** application for exchange programmes and internship, joining a committee, etc.

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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities


5. Peer Network Scheme

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Activity in the Department of Applied Social Studies at CityU



To build-up the network among the department, staff, students and alumni

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B. Project's Experiential Learning Activities

5. Peer Network Scheme

Project X Training Program
Activity in the Department of Applied Social Studies at CityU

- A series of **intensive training programs** (e.g. training camps for freshmen, and leadership training courses) are provided for students in order **to build-up connection and cohesion among students, alumni and teachers.**
- To **provide an opportunity and platform for the teachers and alumni to connect with students** in a relatively informal way



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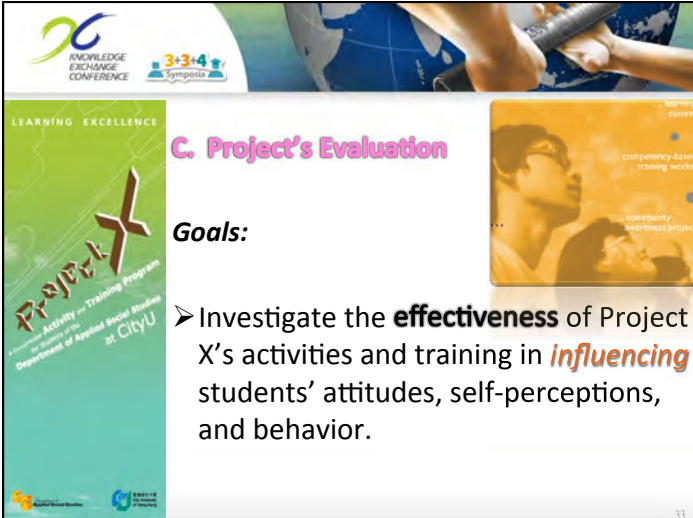
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PROJECT'S EVALUATION



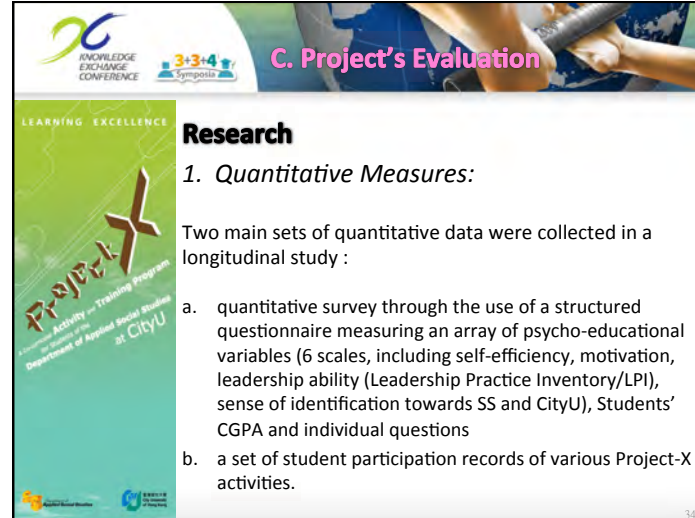
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C. Project's Evaluation

Goals:

- Investigate the **effectiveness** of Project X's activities and training in **influencing** students' attitudes, self-perceptions, and behavior.



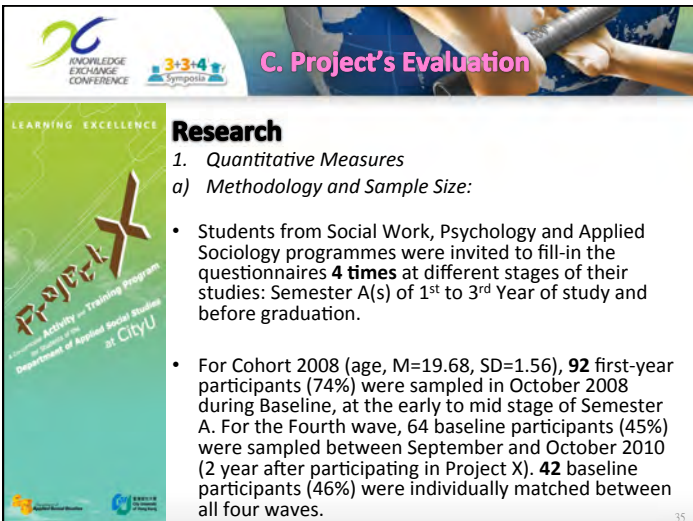
C. Project's Evaluation

Research

1. *Quantitative Measures:*

Two main sets of quantitative data were collected in a longitudinal study :

- quantitative survey through the use of a structured questionnaire measuring an array of psycho-educational variables (6 scales, including self-efficiency, motivation, leadership ability (Leadership Practice Inventory/LPI), sense of identification towards SS and CityU), Students' CGPA and individual questions
- a set of student participation records of various Project-X activities.



C. Project's Evaluation

Research

1. *Quantitative Measures*

a) *Methodology and Sample Size:*

- Students from Social Work, Psychology and Applied Sociology programmes were invited to fill-in the questionnaires **4 times** at different stages of their studies: Semester A(s) of 1st to 3rd Year of study and before graduation.
- For Cohort 2008 (age, M=19.68, SD=1.56), **92** first-year participants (74%) were sampled in October 2008 during Baseline, at the early to mid stage of Semester A. For the Fourth wave, 64 baseline participants (45%) were sampled between September and October 2010 (2 year after participating in Project X). **42** baseline participants (46%) were individually matched between all four waves.




C. Project's Evaluation

Research

b) *Measurement Scales:*

Personal Level	Interpersonal Level	Academic/Professional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Self-Efficacy (17 items) (Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante et al., 1982) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Self-Efficacy (6 items) (Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante et al., 1982) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning (7 items) (Jee et al., 2009)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intrinsic Motivation (15 items) (modified from the Work Preference Inventory in Amabile, Hill, Hemenway, & Tighe, 1994) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Practices (30 items, 3 subscales) (modified from the Leadership Practices Inventory at Fields & Howell, 1997; Palmer & Kocman, 1984, 1993) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career Decision (18 items) (Harmann, Tipton, & Farnsworth, 1973; Deschamps et al., 2004) (6 items)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extrinsic Motivation (15 items) (modified from Amabile et al., 1994) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Efficacy for Friendship (15 items written based on Utter & Paterson, 2004) Sense of Community (toward Department and CityU) (15 items written based on Davidson & Cohen, 1996) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CGPA



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C. Project's Evaluation


Research

c) *Quantitative Key Findings:*

Participating in Project-X activities were found to bring about significant positive effects on various aspects of students' whole person development and academic achievements:

- ✓ All psycho-educational variables, except Career Decision Scale, have shown a positive change from 1st to 2nd year.

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C. Project's Evaluation

Research

c) *Quantitative Key Findings:*

- ✓ Among various Project-X activities, **Workshops** (Partial Eta Squared=.72, $p < .001$) had the strongest main effect acting on psycho-educational variables, followed by **Learning Communities** (Partial Eta Squared=.63, $p < .001$) and **Student Leadership Training Program** (Partial Eta Squared=.58, $p < .01$).

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C. Project's Evaluation

Research

c) *Quantitative Key Findings:*

- ✓ From Roy's Largest Root ANOVA test, **Workshop** has a significant main effect on **CGPAs**, which suggests that higher participation in workshops was associated with a higher CGPA scores in **year 1 and 3 years** of university studies.

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C. Project's Evaluation


Research

2. *Qualitative Methods:*

Focus groups

- 4 focus groups were conducted and each last for an hour
- Purposive sampling with selection criteria on programme of studies, gender and level of participation in Project X activities
- Average 6-9 participants were selected for each session of focus groups

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Student Sharing from Focus Groups:

- Learning communities**
 - “motivate myself to learn through better time management, improving efficiency in problem solving and for future planning, understand others’ feelings”
 - “understand one’s own strengths and weaknesses develop cohesion express feelings and release stress during school life”
- Community-awareness projects**
 - “motivate interest in learning, apply theories in the project and make contribution to the society, learn to lead a group and distribute tasks, develop bonding with tutors provide opportunities to interact with other parties (e.g. NGOs)”

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C. Project's Evaluation

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Conclusion

Project X facilitates students to self-organize learning activities for themselves and for their peers by means of:

- Providing training for attitudes, competence, and leadership skills, team building, group facilitation, program planning, and conflict management, etc.;
- Facilitating students to form working groups for various student activities;

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Conclusion

- Providing consultation and supervision for student-led activities;
- Providing emotional support for students who are confronted with stress and frustration in their student-led activities;
- Providing administrative support to students, e.g. seeking for funding support, venue reservation, promotion and recruitment, etc.

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C. Project's Evaluation

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Thank you!

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