

## **Leadership Enhancement and Development (LEAD) Program**

### **Introduction**

Organized by Student Affairs Office of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, Leadership Enhancement and Development (LEAD) Program is designed to equip students with the generic skills and world knowledge essential for young leaders of the 21st century. During the program, students are empowered to organize cultural events and educational plans to complete their tasks in their displaced countries. Normally, we will send our students to developing countries like Southeast Asian countries to do different kinds of voluntary work, ranging from teaching to building infrastructure, for two to four weeks. We believe that our students can develop intercultural communication skills and leadership skills through interacting with people coming from different cultural backgrounds. The ideological differences in their respective displaced countries can also expand their global perspectives and strengthen their cultural adaptability. Most important, however, the culture of peer learning promoted in our program will help students develop self-awareness, which in turn, fosters their personal growth.

## **The Three Stages in LEAD Program**

LEAD Program is a year-long program that participants will be offshore during Christmas, Easter, and summer holidays. However, all groups will go through the three distinct stages of pre-departure, during program, and follow up in the program.

### **Stage 1: Pre-departure**

The first stage, pre-departure, is characterized by uncertainty about group structure and role expectation. Therefore, mentors play a significant role in assigning tasks, developing group norms, and optimizing group structure.

#### **1. Mentorship**

LEAD program has developed a successful mentoring convention supporting the growth of the participants and mentors throughout



the program. Mentors will have a one-hour pre-meeting every Friday before their team meetings. In the meeting, they will report on their progresses, in particular VISA application, accommodation arrangement, and their communication between the local organizers. The mentor meetings also serve as a platform for mentors to share and

discuss common problems and conflicts.

## 2. Weekly Team Meetings and Group Development



The program has had a well-developed communication system to support all participants and other stakeholders. Before embarking

on their voluntary programs, each group will meet for approximately 300 hours to brainstorm and organize their plans.

As a common practice for team-building, group members will get to know each other in the first meeting. They will then form their task groups with regard to their interest and expertise, and work out their



plans. Once the group structure solidifies, task group members will then have chances to present their ideas before the real execution. In this sense, students can get informal feedback from their peers after their presentations. Indeed, students' presentation

skills have drastically improved through practices. They have gained more confidence and psychological preparation for public speaking.

### **3. Seminars and Workshops on Leadership and Professional Development**

Our program has also organized a number of workshops on service leadership and goal-setting. Students can discover more about themselves through Myers-Briggs



Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment. The ultimate goal of the workshops is to help students develop a respectful attitude towards individual differences and sustain cultural pluralism in a society. Students



are also guided to brainstorm how they can adjust themselves for socialization.

### **4. Wild-cooking Contest**

Students of LEAD program will have an opportunity to cook outdoor with their



teammates. We will put the food preparation process to the test so as to motivate participants to fully indulge themselves in the activity. It is believed that students can develop teamwork and effective communication skills for collaborative work. A debriefing will be held by mentors to evaluate group effectiveness and collect feedback from teammates.



## **Stage 2: During Program**

### **1. Voluntary Work - Education in Developing Countries**



Most of our teams will be assigned to teach at local schools, ranging from kindergarten level to secondary

level, where a small amount of refurbishment is needed during our stays. Our student teachers can immerse themselves in the education discourse of developing countries

and utilize their teaching competence to teach local students. Nonetheless, let me state categorically that the following features of the education system in developing countries are merely the results deduced from my firsthand teaching experience while I do not by any means to underestimate or ignore other possible attributes. The education system will be delineated from different perspectives shown as follows. However, it remains unmistakable that the ideology and economic development of a



society will have great influences on the quality of education and the foci of education system.

### 1.1 Drilling and Diligence



Education in developing countries advocates diligence and repetition. Penmanship and reading aloud are the most common practices in their education. This phenomenon can be found in the schools I taught in

Vietnam and Nepal. As usual, one student would be selected to be the leader and read aloud for the class. Other students would be sitting in a circle reading aloud the alphabet or Arabic numerals. For second language acquisition, students are accustomed to copying English text to consolidate their English language learning.



## 1.2 Student Empowerment

Due to the shortage in human resources at schools, teachers in developing countries tend to empower students to take up some teaching duties and other logistic arrangement both inside and outside classroom context. In comparison with Hong Kong students, students of developing countries have appeared to be more independent and have lower level of uncertainty avoidance. When a new concept or task is introduced in class, they tend to be more open-minded and more willing to try.

### 1.3 Curriculum and Assessment

The schools that my groups visited did not appear to have a holistic and clear curriculum for students. Students of different age groups could sit in the same class. Therefore, it remains unsurprising to see the large age range among students. Nonetheless, their knowledge discrepancy always affected the teaching progress and their cognitive development. The differences in their learning ability manifested in a mathematics test that we gave to a group of primary school students in Nepal. From our observation, most of the older students surpassed the younger ones in the test. For fairness sake, our group would like to separate the class by students' age.

Not only did the wide age range not give green light to curriculum development, it also blocked the possibility to establish assessment to facilitate students' learning. The shortage in manpower also eroded students' motivation to get feedback from teachers. Instead, they usually relied heavily on peer evaluation to give informal feedback to their performances.



## 1.4 Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is still employed for positive discipline sake in developing countries. If a student happens to misbehave or disobey the classroom rules, the student will be punished in order to get rid of their misbehavior.

## 2. Evaluation Meeting

We highly value the evaluation process in our program. Running evaluation meetings has become one of our group



norms. The meeting is deemed to facilitate students to reflect upon their personal encounters in their displaced countries. Despite the limited variety of work students can enroll, we believe that the evaluation meeting is the most effective tool to help students recall and gain insights out of their interaction with local people and their intrapersonal communication within themselves. The meeting is also in line with one of the core values of LEAD program – peer sharing.



In the sharing session, students can share their learning experience and give confirmation to others. Such practice provides a fertilized ground for building a healthy group

communication climate. The legitimate participants are not merely limited to our own group, but other international volunteers. Their participation will not only foster closer ties with local organizers, but also encourage our students to step outside of their comfort zones and use their second language, English language, to express themselves.

Sometimes, students may have encountered some difficulties that they may need more support. The team will serve as a think tank and generate ideas to tackle problems.

Some plans may have been executed effectively; we will still strive to analyze and come up with more ways to improve our effectiveness.

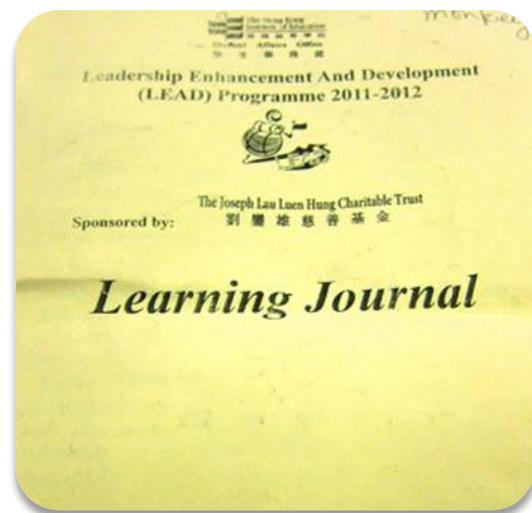
Running a daily evaluation meeting requires two team members to take the lead. They will be empowered to lead the meeting while giving feedback and paraphrase others' ideas during the meetings. To my surprise, students' communicative competence and

presentation skills have improved significantly throughout the program. They tend to produce longer and more complicated utterances in both their first and second language.

### 3. Learning Journal

Each participant of the program will need to finish their reflective journal every day.

The reflective learning journal is an on-going assessment tool to evaluate students' cognitive and affective level of the program, the social issues to which they



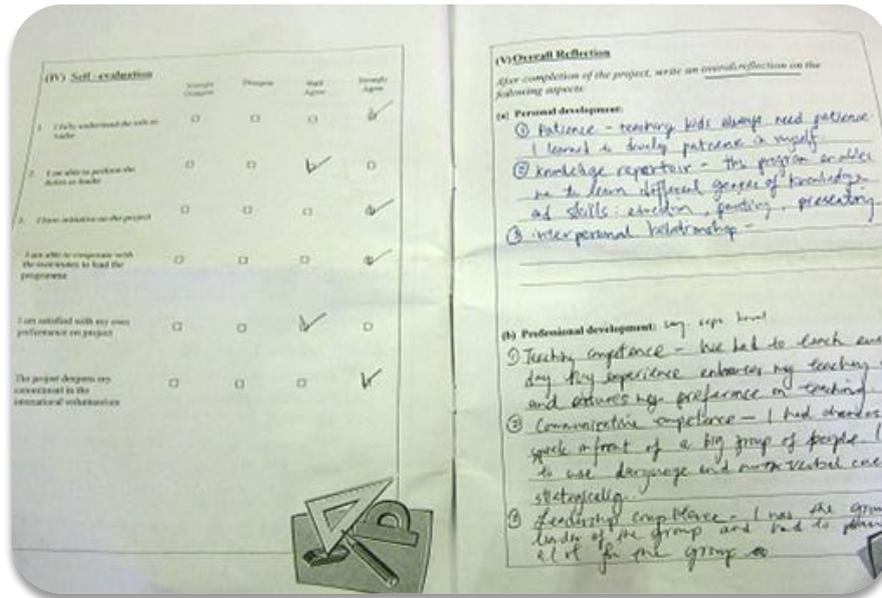
expose during the program, and the concept of international volunteering.

Students' feedback will be collected through qualitative and quantitative means.

Students are guided to recall their voluntary experience in their displaced countries.

To this end, guiding questions are provided to help student reflect on their personal development and their understanding of leadership. Evidences are highly recommended to be inserted to support students' performance appraisals.

In addition to leadership concepts, students are also encouraged to manifest how their personal goals have been accomplished in the program. As mentioned above, students are expected to have acquired skills for identifying and accomplishing goals in one of our pre-departure training workshop – goal-setting workshop.



### Stage 3: Follow Up

#### 1. Group Presentation

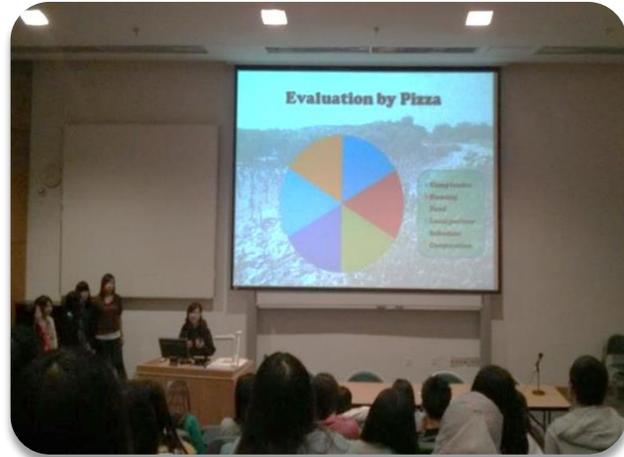
In the last stage of the program, each group will need to complete a 20-minute presentation at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. They are given autonomy to design their artifacts for their



presentations. The most common ones include Powerpoint and posters. Some groups

may circulate group post-cards, booklets, and banners during their presentations.

In the presentation, students are expected to talk about the voluntary work they completed in the program and analyze their group effectiveness. They can also share some conflict



management skills and problem solving skills they employed. Since there will be some other groups going to the same workcamps for volunteering, students are encouraged to give suggestions or personal feedback.

## 2. Evaluation Report

Prior to the disbandment, more wrapping up activities will emerge in the last stage of the program. Students will be asked to give a general evaluation on logistic arrangement, accommodation, catering

services, and transportation. Group effectiveness and group learning experience are also concerned in the report.

## **Conclusion**

What makes LEAD program stand out from the crowd is its student-centreness. The autonomy with which participants are endowed enables them to be the ultimate decision makers in the program. Working in different cultural contexts, students will learn to utilize intercultural communication skills to perform effective communication. In the face of unforeseen contingents, students will learn to enhance their personal qualities and become spontaneous leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

TAM WING YAN, REBECCA

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