A Case Study on English Enhancement Project on "Glocality" and Cultural Literacy

A tertiary education institution introduced an English Enhancement Project aiming to enable students to acquire intercultural communication competency for effective communication in the "glocalised" era and become a competitive "glocal" citizen.

Purpose

The purposes and objectives of this good practice are to i) boost students' cultural literacy and enhance their intercultural communication competency; ii) to develop students' awareness of "glocal" culture and identity in cosmopolitan Hong Kong and teach them how to express these perceptions in English; iii) to encourage senior students to bring the intercultural and literary competency to incoming freshmen to foster a sustainable intercultural environment; and iv) to arouse the awareness of the importance of "glocality" and cultural literary in the 21st century among post-secondary students.

Background of this good practice

The tertiary education institution is of the view that Hong Kong serves as a bridge between the mainland and other cities that the competency in presenting the "glocal" culture and identity in proper English and cultural literacy is of vital importance as a Hong Kong citizen. However, Hong Kong students usually lack motivation to communicate in English comfortably and confidently outside the English learning classroom. Also, there was little intercultural and literacy competency and knowledge of the issue of "glocality" covered in the existing secondary school curriculum. Against this background, the institution applied the Quality Education Support Scheme (QESS) from the Education Bureau (EDB) to run interactive English activities to help enhance students' English competency and "glocal" knowledge to maintain their competitiveness in the contemporary world.

Implementation

There were three approaches to implementing the Project:

- Staff-student Interaction: Regular English activities such as cultural workshops on Different Englishes, Effective Intercultural Communication and Creative Writing delivered by scholars / experts were organised to promote staff-student discussions over cultural issues, and students could

explore "glocal" cultures through interactive tasks at the Intercultural Summer camp. With the help of the staff, students also formed the "Glo-co" Radio Team and produced monthly English podcasts on cultural topics. The intense interaction between students and staff provided an ideal academic environment for students to generate insightful ideas about "glocality" and practice English.

- Appreciation-writing-sharing: Reading chat groups and artistic production appreciation outings were organised on a regular basis and the post-activity English reviews written by the students were shared on the online Cultural Hub and App. The constant practice of reading and writing boosted students' writing ability and the sharing practice also promoted peer-scaffolding which facilitated students' learning process.

- Competitions: Students were encouraged to submit an English review on any cultural / artistic work or an English creative work such as a poem, a short story or a drama script to the Review / Creative Writing Competitions. Outstanding reviews were collected and printed in two books for wider dissemination in the secondary and post-secondary institutions. "Glocal" Speech Festival and "Glocal" Drama Evening were also organised during the "Glocal" Intercultural Week. At the Speech Festival, students presented a research topic on "glocal" culture and rewrote and performed "glocal" adaptions of renowned plays. Those activities had helped students deepen their cultural understanding in addition to enhancing their English competency.

Timeframe

The Project was implemented during the period September 2014 – December 2016

Outcomes

The interactive English activities gave students channels to generate creative ideas to promote Hong Kong as a "glocal" city, helped nurture them to be all-round thinkers pursuing academic excellence and enhanced the interactive delivery skills of cultural knowledge of the teaching staff. The Project also resulted in some adjustments of the contents of the English module design that students' presentations on cultural issues were embedded in the existing college curriculum and more cultural elements were integrated in the core module to emphasise English proficiency as well as cultural literacy. The English learning environment was constantly growing and expanding with new reading chat groups, book/film clubs, weekly English lunches, and cultural workshops every semester. Post-secondary and secondary students in Hong Kong Students in the

greater Hong Kong post-secondary community were also benefitted from the shareability of the institution's Cultural Hub and App which was free for download from the digital distribution platforms or via the Internet. Students from other schools, colleges, and universities could access the Cultural Reviews and YouTube Channel of the institution, and enjoyed their favourite reviews/presentations/drama performances. The dissemination of the students' works in the forms of books and DVDs may motivate other students to step on their pathway of creativity. Overall, the project has brought significant impacts to different stakeholders.

The idea of glocalization has been widespread in the business setting but incorporating the element of "glocality" in the tertiary language curriculum, a public speaking contest, and a drama competition is a new experience among Hong Kong education institutions. The institution's effort in spreading "glocal" awareness among students and boosting students' sense of appreciation of cultures was appreciated by the education sector and the community, and their support was reflected in the participation of a secondary school in the Summer Intercultural Camp in 2016. Also, the institution aims to provide students with "Liberal + Professional" Education and the creation of an interactive academic environment for teaching and learning in an out-of-classroom setting could help achieve the institution's mission.

Review and Continuous Improvements

The project quality was monitored by the project team. Feedback of students and teaching staff were collected at the end of all activities and the project team constantly reviewed the project deliverables and made improvements accordingly. The details of the activities and deliverables were all documented and reported at the departmental meeting once every semester. Quarterly reports and a final report were also submitted to the EDB to keep records of accountability.

The activities conducted for improvement of this practice was as follows:

- Survey. Participants were invited to provide comments by completing a questionnaire after the events.

- Peer observation. Teaching staff from the English department were invited to audit the workshops and give comments for improvement.

Major room for improvement was identified. The participation rate of some workshops in 2014-15 was quite low. The issue was discussed at the departmental meeting and it was suggested that cultural workshops should be run at the beginning each semester, when students were less occupied with their assignments. In addition, the number of student audience was also low for the Speech Festival and Drama Evening in 2015. The project team then collaborated

with some English module coordinators to promote the events to the students in class and encouraged them to participate in the events in 2016. The number of audiences rose significantly in the 2016 events.

Resources

The project involved financial and physical resources such as manpower, facilities, services and general expenses. Full-time Project Manager and Project Assistant were hired for the implementation of the Project and the teaching staff as well as the Head and Associate Head of the Department took up different promoting, liaison, delivery and monitoring roles in the implementation of the project. A Cultural Hub and App was also developed to upload and share students' works (e.g., cultural reviews, radio podcasts, speech festival presentations, and drama evening performances) on the Internet.

Acknowledgement