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Service-Learning initiatives help preserve forgotten memories

The meaningful Service-Learning projects initiated by Lingnan University prove to be a win-win-win situation for students, teachers and society.

A biding by the proverbial saying, “With great power comes great responsibility”, Lingnan University, the only liberal arts university in Hong Kong, has pioneered a university-wide Service-Learning scheme that provides mutual benefits for students, teachers and the community.

Offered by the Office of Service-Learning at Lingnan University, Service-Learning combines formal academic studies, meaningful service and reflection through projects that encourage knowledge transfer, community development, and tackling social issues.

Preserving important stories

In one of the most recent Service-Learning initiatives, a group of students from Department of Chinese has embarked on a project to write a biographical fiction for senior citizens in their Classical Chinese Fiction course.

With the assistance from course instructors and facilitators, ten students paid visits to the Salvation Army Kam Tin Residence for Senior Citizens and helped record the life stories for five elderly people living with dementia.

“Literature and society are closely related. It is influenced by elements ranging from time to people. Through these projects, students have the chance to make reference from the

residents’ memories and document them in short novels.” says Prof. Grace Lau, the course instructor of Classical Chinese Fiction.

Lau says she was glad to see students taking an active role in understanding the lives of senior members, and researching the history of old Hong Kong. “To them, war, poverty, life and death during the 50s and 60s are very distant, but these memories are of significant historical value.”

Yan Lai, a Year 3 student, interviewed an elderly woman who had experienced the fall of Guangzhou and the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, and was deeply moved



Prof. Grace Lau,
course instructor of
Classical Chinese Fiction



Yan Lai, Year 3 student

by the experience. “Her stories are very inspiring, and her experiences and attitude towards life in terms of hardship deserve to be respected, and her contribution to society should be recognized.”

She has also learned to communicate with senior members after participating in this Service-Learning project. “Throughout the visits, I realized elderly people are not as hard

to communicate with as I expected. During trainings, our facilitator Ms. Evelyn Liang taught us how to use photos and old snacks from back in the day to start the conversation with them, and now I use the same skills to talk to the elderly!”

Social impact

According to Lau, the project has also raised students’ concern over dementia and addressed the needs of elderly people with dementia. “Early stages of dementia can be delayed with sufficient stimulation and interaction with others. We worked closely with the nurses from the residence to bring happiness and warmth to the senior members.”

The stories written were compiled into a book to be shared among the families of the elderly, so that these fading memories will be kept and passed on for future generations.



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