The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Capacity Building Scheme for Secondary School Teachers:

Promoting Meaningful Social Engagement for Young People through Service-Learning

01 Background

Academic service-learning (SL) is a high-impact pedagogy that integrates meaningful community service with academic study. SL is commonly practised in K-12 schools in many Western countries. However, SL and community service or voluntary service are often conflated in K-12 schools in Hong Kong and hence is not widely implemented.

PolyU launched a three-year project entitled, **"Capacity Building Scheme for Secondary School Teachers: Promoting Meaningful Social Engagement for Young People through Service-Learning"**, with a generous donation from Chow Tai Fook Charity Foundation and Keswick Foundation. We believe that SL can address existing concerns in Hong Kong youth:

- Students care about the society but lack knowledge on *how* to care about it / *what* they can do about it

- Overly exam-oriented school life and low interest in learning

- A "missing link" between what is taught at school and what is needed in the society/real life

- "Widespread youth disillusionment" and "erosion of societal cohesion" (Global Risks Report, 2019)

The restructuring of Citizenship and Social Development (公民與社會發展科) have freed up 100-250 teaching hours. EDB suggested schools using that to **"facilitate whole-person development"** and **"connect learning with real-life".** We feel that SL is the best suited to achieve these purposes.

02 Aim

Teachers are the key to quality education. The project aims to promote "academic SL" in secondary schools through equipping teachers with essential attitudes, knowledge and skills, and ultimately promote meaningful social engagement for young people and enhance their academic learning.

03 Project Duration

From January 2022 to June 2025

04 Target Groups

All secondary schools, their teachers, teaching assistants, social workers and allied professionals have responsibilities to teach students and/or coordinate service-related programmes.

15HOURS
e-learning module

20HOURS
face to face
core courses

20HOURS
online/ face to face
elective courses

SLLLO

Thematic talks, seminars, sharing sessions, work-shops, and local or non-local field visits.

Applicable to Continuing Professional Development hours for teachers and principals. A one-year with a total of 55 hours systematic capacity building programme for teachers. The course will cover theory learning, skills training, field observation. PolyU team will provide close guidance and mentoring to assist participants to develop, implement and evaluate their own SL project.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

Evaluation
Assessment
SL programmes
Exemplars
Manual
Lesson plans

ENG
中

2 A Community of Practice on SL will be set up to promote continuous development and peer support.

3 Scholarships for SL professional development for all teachers to apply.

4 e-Resources library
- evaluation and assessment tools
- SL programmes
- lesson plans
- manuals

5 Bilingual introductory online course for secondary school students.

1. Key School

- Commit to integrating SL into their school curriculum in 5 years.
- Nominate at least 5 teachers for the "SL educator certification course" and support these teachers to implement SL programmes in school.
- Key schools will be invited to send their students to participate in PolyU's SL projects, covering STEM, language, adolescent development and service leadership, etc.

2. Associated School

- Encourage their teachers to attend the SL professional development programmes.
- Nominate at least 1 teacher for the "SL educator certification course" and support the teacher to develop an SL programme in school.

Key and Associated Schools can enjoy the following privileges:

- With priority for all the professional training programmes and the scholarship scheme offered by this project
- Free access to the SL e-resource library and bilingual online SL courses on SL for teachers and students

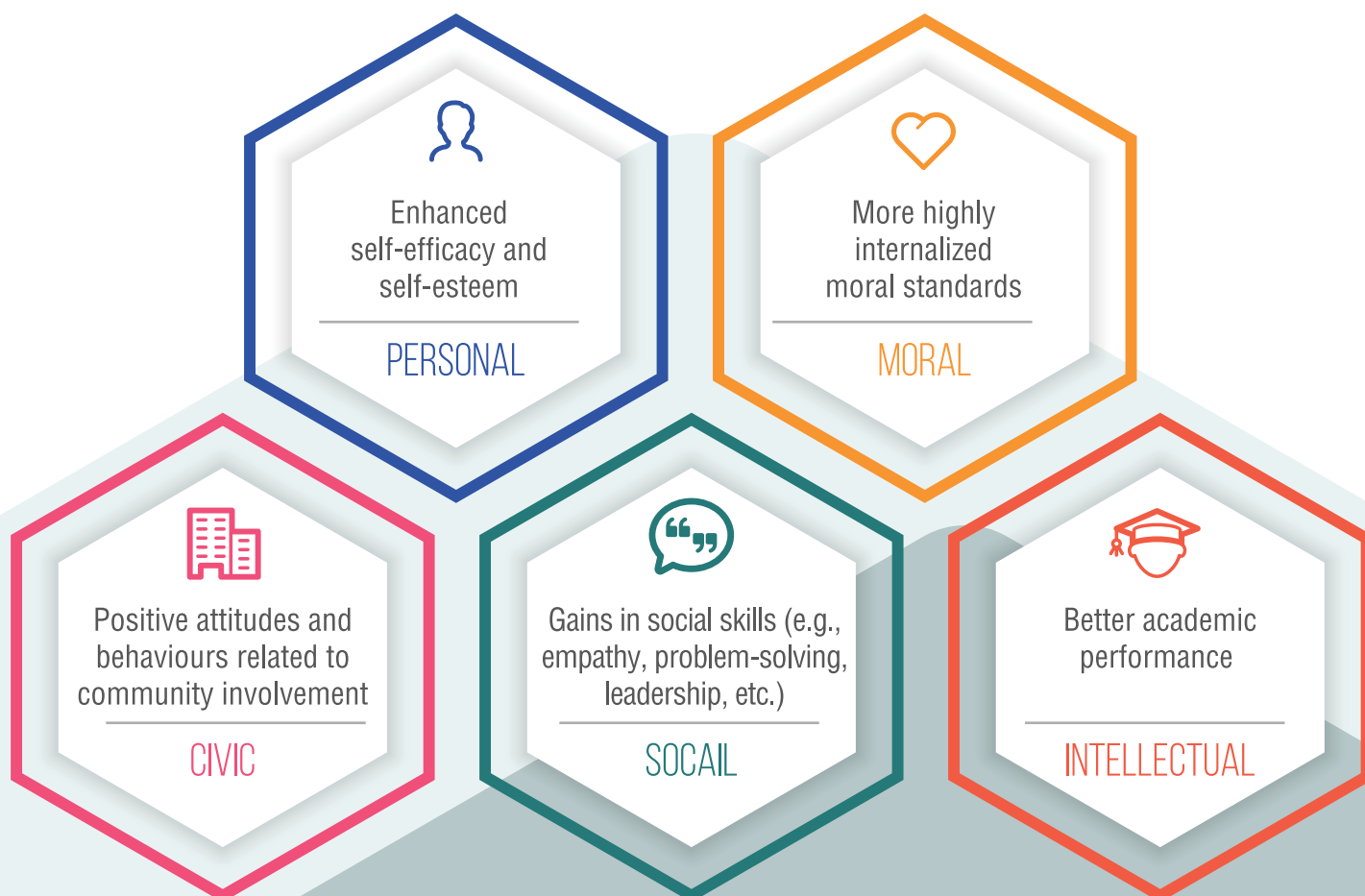Key persons developing academic SL in PolyU lead this scheme:

Prof. Daniel Shek
Associate Vice President
(Undergraduate Programme)
Li & Fung Professor in Service
Leadership Education
Chair Professor of Department
of Applied Social Sciences

Dr Grace Ngai
Head of Service-Learning and
Leadership Office
Associate Professor of Department
of Computing

08 Academic SL is a high-impact pedagogy

Academic SL integrates meaningful community service with rigorous academic study and deep reflections to enrich students' learning experience for achieving the desired learning outcomes. It differs from community service or charity by linking to the curriculum through a process of understanding community needs, preparing for service, challenging action, structured reflection, and demonstration of learning and impact.

SL has been widely recognised as a powerful pedagogy for fostering students' moral, personal, social and, in particular, civic, and intellectual development. For example, Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki (2011) have conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis study on the impact of academic SL on 11,837 students at different educational levels in the U. S. In comparison to controls, students participating in SL programs demonstrate significant gains as follows:

Enhanced
self-efficacy and
self-esteem

PERSONAL

More highly
internalized
moral standards

MORAL

Positive attitudes and
behaviours related to
community involvement

CIVIC

Gains in social skills (e.g.,
empathy, problem-solving,
leadership, etc.)

SOCAIL

Better academic
performance

INTELLECTUAL

Consistent findings are also reported in many similar studies involving middle and high school students (e.g., Billig, 2000; Melchior & Bailis, 2002; Skinner & Chapman, 1999). **When well implemented, academic SL helps students link what they learn to their services and better understand themselves and others' needs in a real-life setting.** When they see the meaning in learning, their learning interest increases; when they make others' lives better, their life satisfaction and sense of social responsibility increases, and hence sense of hopelessness declines. In the literature of positive youth development, it is well-documented that prosocial behavior, such as serving others, can help promote adolescents' well-being.

Below are some potential SL projects suitable to be implemented in Hong Kong that allows students to apply their knowledge gained from different academic subjects:

**CHINESE LANGUAGE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

Apply their language skills to write life stories for disadvantaged groups . Disseminate through social media with positive messages to promote community development and integration.

**LIBERAL STUDIES
INTEGRATED HUMANITIES**

Develop and lead a community tour for children after investigating the district's population, features, history, etc.

**HISTORY
CHINESE HISTORY**

Empower older adults to construct positive life stories surrounding the development of Hong Kong.

VISUAL ART

Develop an art programme at the local elderly centres for promotion of well-being.

MATHEMATICS

Develop and organise an interesting math game day for children with special needs to arouse their interest in learning math.

**INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Apply IT literacy to teach the elderly practical IT skills, e.g., online shopping, information searching, social media, internet security, fact-checking, etc.

**INTEGRATED SCIENCE
PHYSICS CHEMISTRY BIOLOGY**

Students can be trained by university students with STEM knowledge and skills. They will then communicate with the clients (e.g., the elderly or people with disabilities) to understand their needs. Then, they will apply what they learned to develop assistive devices to solve their clients' daily life problems.

This is an existing PolyU SL subject collaborating with secondary schools.

MUSIC

Explore and perform different genre of music with the disadvantaged groups to promote their well-being.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Exercise with children from disadvantaged groups to promote a habit of regular exercise.