

Facilitating Knowledge Application and Fostering Social Responsibility via Service-Learning

“Practices in Health Promotion” was introduced in 2019 at SPEED as a Service-Learning subject. Students are expected to promote public health knowledge learned in the classroom to the general public. Since its launch, the subject has received positive feedback from both our students and partner organisations, testifying to its remarkable outcomes.

“Health Studies places equal emphasis on theory and practice, so we offer Service-Learning as an award-specific compulsory subject to help students develop their empathy, social responsibility and professionalism,” emphasised Dr Ben Fong, Associate Division Head of the Division of Science, Engineering and Health Studies and Professor of Practice (Health Studies).

Integrating Service with Learning

Dr Fong said that Service-Learning is highly beneficial to students. For example, students taking “Practices in Health Promotion” are required to form four groups to serve and learn at four elderly centres of Sik Sik Yuen for ten weeks. Through assisting in organising activities and direct interaction with service recipients, students can apply what they have learned and understand how social welfare organisations operate.

Roderick Fung, a year-two student of BSc (Hons) in Applied Sciences (Health Studies) who has participated in Service-Learning in an elderly centre, shared his unforgettable experience, “Service-Learning enabled me to learn to put myself in their shoes and fully consider their needs when organising activities for the service recipients. Initially, it was not easy for me to break the ice and chat with the elderly immediately as I had no experience of living with seniors. Later on, by sharing some nutrient information with the elderly, my groupmates and I were able to find topics of common interest and gradually develop our relationship with them. This experience has helped us improve our observation, analytical and problem-solving skills.”

Achieving Mutual Benefits between Students and Partner Organisations

Service-Learning not only broadens students’ horizons and develops their maturity, but also provides partner organisations with insights and eases manpower shortage in the elderly care service industry.

Dr Fong praised, “When discussing health care systems and social welfare organisations, students with Service-Learning experience usually demonstrate deeper thinking, both in terms of breadth and depth, than those without undergoing Service-Learning; they also participate more actively in discussions.”

Mr Chan Siu-kay, Project Leader of Sik Sik Yuen, one of the partner organisations, agreed that Service-Learning provides a platform of inter-generational harmony for young people to live in close communion with the elderly. He added, “Service-Learning is indeed mutually beneficial; students can acquire practical experience while we can get the latest health information. Our colleagues sometimes gain new inspirations from students. For example, when designing activities for the elderly, students will consider their genuine needs and add some innovative elements. Also, due to the pandemic, students have filmed videos to teach the elderly simple exercise. This was beyond our expectations.”

As an experiential learning approach, Service-Learning subjects enable students to put knowledge into practice and contribute to society. Looking ahead, Dr Fong hopes that Service-Learning subjects will become more universal and receive widespread support from organisations.



Service-Learning students enjoy stretching with the elderly.
參與服務學習的學生與長者同樂，一起練習伸展運動。



Roderick (2nd left, back row) and his team members share health information with the elderly.
馮志鏗同學（後排左二）和組員與長者分享健康資訊。

服務學習應用課堂知識 培養社會責任感

自 2019 年起，SPEED 將 Practices in Health Promotion 訂為服務學習科目，期望學生活用課堂所學的公共衛生知識，在課堂外向普羅大眾推廣。自推行以來，該科目獲學生和合作機構好評，成效顯著。

科技、工程及健康學部副主任及實務教授（健康學）方玉輝醫生強調：「由於健康學理論與實踐並重，將服務學習訂為學科專業必修科，旨在協助學生建立同理心、培養社會責任和專業精神。」

寓服務於學習中

方醫生表示，服務學習科目對於學生大有裨益。以修讀 Practices in Health Promotion 的學生為例，他們分為四組，在嗇色園屬下的四間長者中心進行為期十星期的服務學習。學生協助中心籌辦活動，直接接觸受助對象，實踐所學之餘，也能了解社福機構的實際運作。

應用科學（榮譽）理學士（健康學）課程二年級同學馮志鏗曾於長者中心進行服務學習，他分享難忘的經歷：「服務學習讓我學會為受助對象籌備活動時，懂得易地而處及全面思考。由於我未曾與長者同住，最初要在短時間內跟長者打開話匣子並不容易。後來，我和組員想到為長者提供營養學的資訊，從中找到話題，然後慢慢建立關係。這些經驗正好提升了我們的觀察、分析和解難能力。」

學生與合作機構互惠互利

服務學習不但擴闊學生的視野，使他們思想變得成熟，合作機構也能從中得到新思維，並紓緩安老服務行業人手短缺的問題。

方醫生讚揚：「同學具備社福機構的服務經驗後，在討論關於醫療系統與社福機構的相關課題時，在思想上較未參與過服務學習的同學更見深度及廣度，在課堂上更積極主動參與討論。」

嗇色園是服務學習的合作機構之一，項目負責人陳紹基先生認為，服務學習能夠提供「長幼共融」的平台，讓長者與青年人有更多的溝通機會。他補充：「服務學習能夠互惠互利，同學可以汲取實際經驗，我們也可以了解最新的健康資訊。在活動過程中有時也能從同學身上得到啟發，例如同學設計的活動，會顧及長者的實際需要，並加入創意。另外，由於疫情關係，同學又會拍片教長者做簡單的運動，這些都是我們意想不到的。」

服務學習科目以體驗學習方式，讓學生學以致用，回饋社會。展望未來，方醫生寄望服務學習科目能夠更加普及，並獲更多機構的支持。