

## Service-Learning in a Non-traditional Education Environment

In 2016-17 **Ecology: the Science of Environmental Issues**, one of the courses in the Science, Technology, and Society cluster of the Core Curriculum at Lingnan University, was offered using the service-learning pedagogy. University students **enhanced their academic learning by developing and conducting science related activities with local primary and secondary school**

**students**. We collaborated with 3 schools in Tuen Mun: 2 **traditional government schools, and one non-traditional private school, the RTG Gaia School**. Here we present students' responses to working with children from the non-traditional school and discuss how that might inform how we can improve General Education courses in Hong Kong.

### Eye-Opening Visit to the Gaia School

#### Gaia's Vision and Mission

- ★ Value **learning experience** over learning outcomes
- ★ Ensure a **fun and challenging learning process** for the children
- ★ Encourage students to **raise question and to look for answers**, which develop their **capabilities to solve problem** and to **learn by themselves**

"In Gaia School, we decide to **abandon the authority** as we believe that **children are born curious** and they have the **natural desire to learn**. With a natural environment, children should be able to find things that interest them."

#### Photo Highlights



#### Lingnan Students' Reflection

"When the students were doing the leaf burning experiment, one found that he could not do it well as he could not hold the magnifying glass stably so he ran back to the classroom and got some tools that could help him such as books, rulers and even his school bag. Although his action was totally unacceptable in traditional primary school, I was impressed by his creativity and innovative mind."

"Gaia students are curious about the things happening around them. Not like us, being trained as an examination machine. In HK typical education, it is easy to get erased the curiosity to the world. This is a great experience for me and it has definitely broadened my horizon."

"Gaia students' imagination and ideas impressed me so much. I am sometimes restrained by the reality and refuse to break through but the Gaia students are brave enough to step out of their confront zone to try new things. I should learn from them."

"In this course, I didn't have to worry about grades and examination. I just needed to keep learning new things by asking questions. I am an outgoing girl who like hiking and sports. Having fieldtrip on every lesson was my dream in secondary school; finally the dream came true in the university service learning course."

"Gaia students impressed me so much as they are so creative and confident. They are more willing to express their views in public and think out of the box."

"In this S-L project I have a better understanding that there are some non-traditional schools which educate the students in a very different way."

### INSPIRATION is What Matters

Unlike the outspoken Gaia students, the politeness of Hong Kong university students might stop them from showing their lack of inspiration in classes. General Education courses offer the opportunity to offer the best and to bring diversity to tertiary education, so we should take advantage of a variety of

engaging pedagogies to rekindle the love of learning in our students. You will be amazed by students' initiative, critical thinking, and problem solving skills shown in the process of interactive and hands-on learning.



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