

SLLO NEWSLETTER

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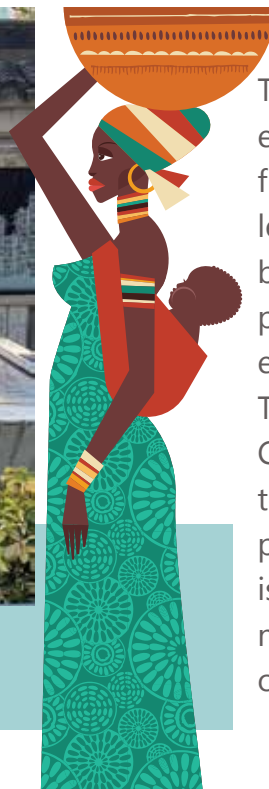
09 Symposium

Socially Responsible Global Leadership in the Digital World

With the current pandemic forcing most interactions and collaborations to go online, what does it mean to be a socially responsible leader in one's social interactions and ability to serve? Students of the Service-Learning (SL) subject, *COMP3S02 Socially Responsible Global Leadership in the Digital World* offered by the Department of Computing (COMP) tackled this question in their service project during their winter break in January 2021. With an aim to connect underserved learners from different cultures who were forced to learn at home due to the pandemic in the discussion of wellbeing for the younger generations, this project involved PolyU students, secondary school learners from Hong Kong (Caritas Ma On Shan Secondary School) and South Africa (Pre-University Academy of University of Pretoria) in collaborative 360 video production in a virtual setting.



Hong Kong learners and PolyU students giving the live historical tour in Kowloon Walled City Park



To elaborate, 17 PolyU students enrolled in the captioned subject were first taken through various models of leadership and global citizenship before the service project. They then practiced these concepts in a virtual exchange experience with peers from The University of Maryland in a Global Classroom, where together they used tools of design thinking to propose a product/service that can address social issues for underserved groups who are negatively affected by the coronavirus outbreak.



Hong Kong learners conducting a live historical tour in Kowloon Walled City Park for their peers in South Africa through Zoom



After the immersive online experience that constantly challenged them to analyze complex issues from local and international points of view, and to demonstrate sensitivity and empathy for others, PolyU students dived into the week-long service project. They were teamed up with secondary school learners from Hong Kong and South Africa in 9-10 and served as the facilitators for the learners with the help of three students from University

of Pretoria Engineering. Specifically, the PolyU students designed and delivered team-building and video production workshops for the learners. With the preparation on the cultural knowledge and technical know-hows, participants from Hong Kong brought their peers in South Africa on a live historical tour with the 360 cameras in the Kowloon Walled City Park. Learners in South Africa, in return, offered their counterparts a virtual wildlife tour of the Lory Park Zoo in their country. The last stage of the workshop involved the PolyU students to help their younger peers create a storyboard so that the teams comprised of learners in Hong Kong and South Africa can shoot the respective footage for their final videos.

PolyU students and the learners overcame many difficulties in this service project. These difficulties ranged from digital divide, language barriers, to fluctuated situations of the pandemic which hindered outdoor shootings. However, it was encouraging to see how the participants were able to turn these challenges into invaluable lessons on leading others with empathy, creativity and resilience at times of uncertainty through effective reflection and facilitation. Such momentum had eventually helped the teams to produce educational and memorable videos as the fruits of their collaboration.



A group of meerkats being filmed for playing with animal enrichment tools





South African learners recording the interactive tour in Lory Park Zoo for Hong Kong learners

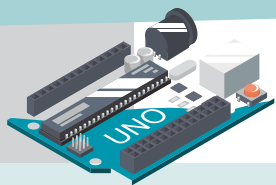
One video, for example, featured endangered animals in Hong Kong and South Africa to raise viewers' awareness and advocated for what one could do to help. Another one captured a day in the life of learners in two different places to showcase how despite coming from very different parts of the world, they share many commonalities. One team also conducted a dialogue to dispel common cultural stereotypes made about the team members.



This service project was born under the "new normal" where all face-to-face interactions were brought to a halt. However, in very different corners of the world, individuals from diverse backgrounds still found ways to engage each other in meaningful conversations and collaborations by making creative use of advanced technology. The SL subject team expects to maintain the relationships built across institutions during this project, and to create more opportunities for future students to practice socially responsible leadership in the digital arena.



Learners in the South Africa attending an online team-building activity in a computer lab



We cannot Travel, but Knowledge can

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries have imposed quarantines and travel bans. Many of our planned offshore SL projects have been affected, but we did not want to admit defeat and just sit on our hands, waiting for the virus to pass. Instead, we switched our services online to provide learning opportunities for our students to serve the needy in other countries.



PolyU students teaching Philippines students how to connect pins in Arduino board through Google Meet

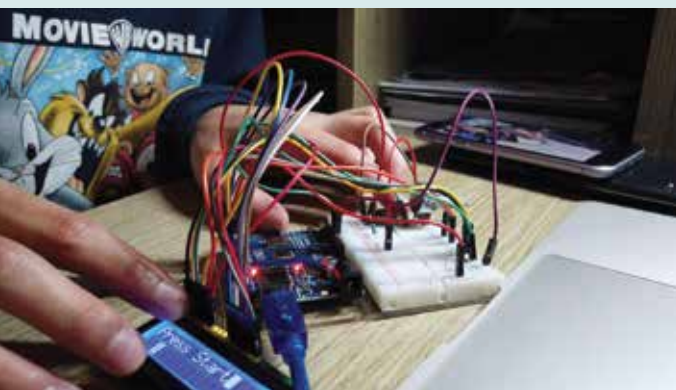
An SL subject, *BME2S03 Reducing the Scientific Divide in Secondary Students through STEM Projects*, originally planned to lead a team of 16 PolyU students last summer to facilitate high school students in the Philippines to develop smart ageing products for elderly people in the urban slum community. The subject made a switch to online lectures and organised a series of online workshops to guide school students in the Philippines in their development of age-friendly exercise game gadgets with Arduino microcontrollers.

As this was the first time we organised SL activities together with students in the Philippines, our teaching team and students had to overcome a lot of obstacles, including poor internet connectivity with the underprivileged school students, the lack of computers in the slum community, the logistics of delivery and distribution of teaching apparatus to the Philippines, limited understanding of their living environment and cultures gained from online meetings, etc. Although we faced lots of new challenges, it was a blessing that we had a passionate collaborating partner, the LOOC National High School in Nasugbu, Batangus. What was not lacking was the passion from the school teachers, the enthusiasm of the school students, the learning of our students, and the appreciation of every participant.

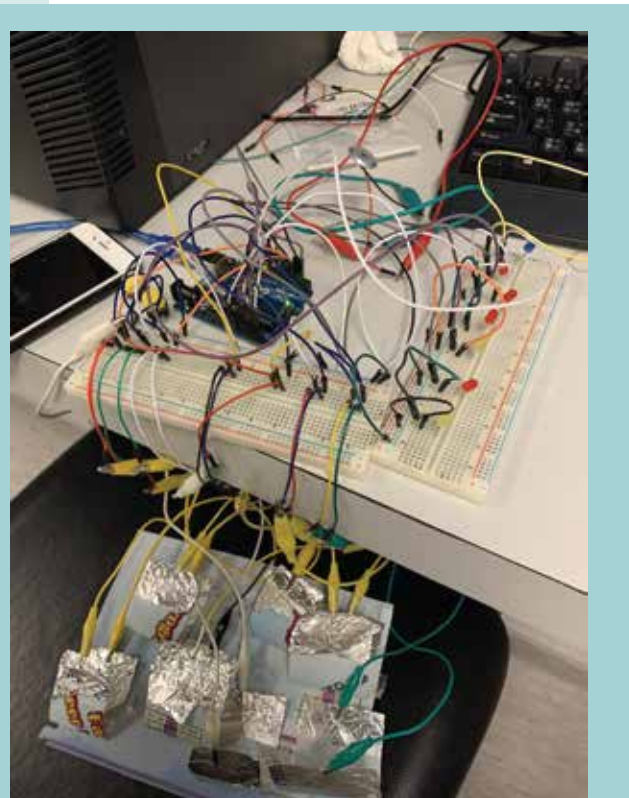


Philippines high school students learning how to develop an exercise game gadget by using Arduino microcontroller

The online project was a success. High school students developed Piano Keyboard Game, Jump-Man Game on a LCD display, and Ping-Pong Game using the Arduino. In developing countries such as the Philippines, underprivileged students have limited exposure to STEM education due to low accessibility to computers and the Internet. We cannot change much about their living conditions but we can train their critical thinking skills and provide them with hands-on experience on how STEM can be applied to solve daily problems. Even though we cannot travel to their country physically, there is no reason why quality knowledge cannot if we could apply our creativity, technological advancements, and empathy in time.



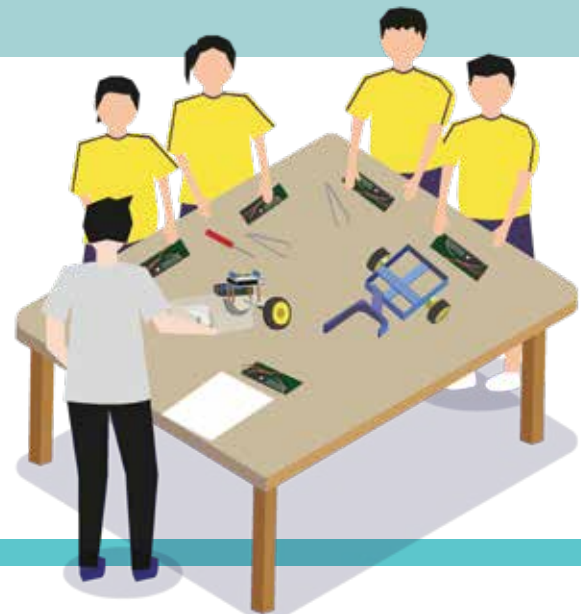
The Jump-Man Game on a LCD display was one of the game products delivered in the project



A Piano Keyboard Game designed by PolyU students



A school teacher making the switches in the Philippines using the apparatus pack delivered by PolyU





Team-building for Service-Learning in a Virtual Setting

Team-based SL project is one of the powerful mediums for students to develop leadership qualities such as empathy, interpersonal skills, creative problem-solving, and resilience, etc. When this kind of project is curated in a cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional, and cross-cultural setting, it could bring the additional value of developing global citizenship and intercultural competence among the participants. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has obstructed face-to-face instruction as well as international travel, has doubtlessly added complexities to the implementation of these SL activities. We dedicate this article to an on-going international SL programme with the aforementioned characteristics. We will take a look at how it has coped with the challenges post by the “new norm” of teaching and learning to equip its participants for effective teamwork in an online environment.



A Team-building day organised to get the participants familiar with their project peers and East Africa

As one of three flagship programmes organised by the Service-Learning and Leadership Office (SLLO) under the Leadership Academy for Responsible Global Citizenship (LARGC), Habitat Green in East Africa engages students from multiple disciplines to design green energy solutions for families in Rwanda through a one-year leadership programme. Precisely, students from *BSE3S02 Living Environment for Low-income Communities in Developing Regions*, *COMP3S02 Socially Responsible Global Leadership in a Digital World*, and *EE2S01 Low-cost Energy Infrastructures for Developing Regions* work together to develop global leadership and cross-cultural competence in the context of sustainable living. The

programme will end with an on-site or online service project in which students apply their learning outcomes to improve the energy sustainability for remote villages in Rwanda.

To get the students of diverse academic and cultural backgrounds ready to serve as a team, a fun and competitive virtual team-building activity was organised in January 2021. Students who had enrolled in the captioned subjects were divided into mixed teams of 3-4 to complete in an online Amazing Race consisting of five stages. At each stage, they were confronted with obscure and challenging tasks. Upon completing each stage, the teams would be given a passcode to unlock the next one.



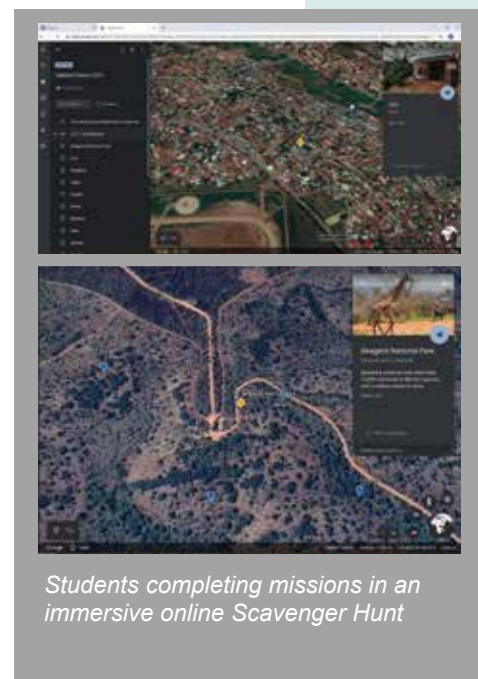
Some screen captures on the different stages in the online Amazing Race

Hosting a team-building activity for 60 students was not easy, not to mention that the organiser hosted it online for the first time! While they were developing the activity, not only it was important to employ a suitable virtual platform to pull every piece together, the tasks must be designed to be considerably difficult but interesting at the same time. The tasks should also be complicated enough to encourage collaborative inputs from all team members instead of the effort from a single person. It was only under this circumstance the activity could help students communicate, bond, and learn about their teammates' personalities better.



In addition, we also seized this opportunity to familiarize the participants with the service site, Rwanda, in an intriguing and interactive manner. The tasks of each stage were curated with the central theme of East Africa. To accomplish the tasks effectively, the student teams were required to research on the social and cultural environment of the locale.

It was delighted to see that the students were engaged during the activity despite the fact that they were participating virtually in different places, or even in different time zones. All of them demonstrated key qualities of a good leader – being creative in solving problems, willing to persist in fact of setbacks, and working effectively with other teammates. It is hoped that students can catch a glimpse at their service location and learn how their service recipients are living on the other side of the world. By now, students should have even known how cold Rwanda can possibly be and what is the favorite drink for chilling out there!



Students completing missions in an immersive online Scavenger Hunt



Students tackling challenges as a team



Assessing and Grading Credit-bearing Service-Learning Subjects



Since the introduction of the mandatory SL requirement in 2012/13, we have almost 4,000 students enrolled in around 70 SL subjects every year. These subjects vary in disciplines, instructors, modes of teaching and learning, service nature, locations, and setting. An important consideration in the design of credit-bearing SL subjects is, therefore, how to maintain consistency and fairness across assessment. To this end, the Community of Practice in Service-Learning (CoP-SL) organised a workshop entitled “Assessing and Grading Credit-bearing Service-Learning Subjects” on 8 February 2021 to articulate the University’s guidelines and good practices adopted by experienced teachers.



Dr Stephen Chan (left), Dr Grace Ngai (middle) and Dr Barry Mak (right) facilitating the online workshop

Dr Grace Ngai, head of SLLO, kicked start the session by highlighting the basic principle of SL assessment: grading students’ learning instead of their service or deliverables. It was followed by a reminder that teachers should structure their assessment components wisely to help students attain the four Common Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) of SL subjects (please see the SL Handbook for details). On top of the assessment scheme design, it was important to communicate the grading criteria and standards to students in the form of rubrics early.

The second speaker, Dr Stephen Chan, former head of SLLO, walked the participants through some interesting scenarios of grading in SL classes. Through an interactive mock grading exercise, Dr Chan underlines the importance of collecting sufficient and relevant learning data from students for an authentic and holistic assessment of their performance. It was also suggested that teachers may conduct similar mock grading activities with their students with reference to real cases of their former students to familiarize them with the rubrics efficiently.

Lastly, Dr Barry Mak, the chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Service-Learning Subjects (SCSLs) and Associate Professor from the School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM), shared tips on how to involve multiple parties (e.g. NGO partners, community helpers) and deploy multiple tools (e.g. students’ daily self-reflection, candid camera) to effectively assess students’ on-site service performance based on his subject, *HTM3801 Community Tourism: Tour, Training, Operator, and Event from and for the Community*.

The workshop yielded encouraging feedback, with 100% of the participants rating it 4 or above (rating scale: 5 = excellent; 1 = poor). To view the video recording and slides, please go to: <https://polyu.hk/eUrdA>.

**International
Symposium and Expo**
on
Service-Learning &
Socially Responsible Global Citizenship
[Online]
服務學習及環球公民國際研討暨博覽會
(線上)

SLLO is going to organise the International Symposium and Expo on Service-Learning and Socially Responsible Global Citizenship online on 9-10 July 2021. Through this online Symposium and Expo, we hope to connect teachers, students, and the community to share their SL experiences and showcase their projects without the physical limitations of geographical boundaries and the hassles of time zones.

The COVID-19 pandemic imposed social distancing on all of us and precipitated a plethora of changes in serving the community. It forced us to clarify our beliefs and reiterate our determination to serve. Reflecting on the one-year anniversary of the pandemic, one key lesson we have learned is that creative, caring, inclusive and regular communication between different partners can lead to an improved understanding of individual responsibility and foster a greater capacity to adopt "the new normal". Learning about how others have adjusted and adapted their practices and learning can be a stepping stone to a "new future", that is not just a stopgap that has to be adopted during this difficult time, but has far-reaching potentials for benefitting the community at large and reaching out to the most excluded ones, both right now and in the future beyond COVID-19.

The Symposium and Expo will take place entirely online. We will invite like-minded colleagues to share practices, expertise and collaborations in the form of talks, exhibitions, poster presentations, or even interactive workshops. Participants can have spontaneous conversations with those around them and explore different interactable objects on our customized virtual meeting space.

You will receive more information in due course. Please mark your diary. We hope to see you in this big gathering.

Details



<https://www.polyu.edu.hk/sllo/symposium/>

Application

Secondary School



<https://polyu.hk/hnnMN>

High Education



<https://polyu.hk/FHRqf>