



# SLLO NEWSLETTER

May, 2021

/Highlights/



## 10 Questions

*Maggie Tsin-tung NG The Winner of Outstanding Student Award 2020 on her unforgettable Service-Learning (SL) experience at PolyU, what keeps her committed to community services, and how she would like to motivate herself to serve others after graduation.*

Congratulations Maggie! Can you tell us something about yourself?

I'm a final year surveying student in the Department of Building and Real Estate (BRE), Faculty of Construction and Environment (FCE).

Can you tell us something about your SL experience at PolyU?

I've participated in a one-year leadership programme jointly organised by PolyU and Peking University to nurture students to be competent and responsible ethical leaders with global vision. Throughout the programme, I had the chances to participate in leadership courses, training, experiential workshops and international study service trips to Belt and Road countries together with about 30 students coming from Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea and Malaysia.



Maggie (far right) visiting a local village in Yunan



Maggie and her teammates listening to stories told by the villagers



A tour to the Start-up Center in Tel Aviv, Israel



Maggie speaking in International Youth Forum: "Vision for equality-creating an inclusive society" at University of Haifa, Israel



### What was the most impactful thing from your SL experience?

It is definitely voluntary teaching in Kyrgyzstan. We wanted to develop children's Intellectual Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ), Adversity Quotient (AQ), Spiritual Quotient (SQ), health and scientific knowledge through an interactive teaching approach that filled with handcraft, team games and mini experiments back then. It is through this experience that I felt the reciprocal relationship between service providers and service recipients. It is not merely about how a service provider sacrifices his/her time to help strangers but, instead, how he/she can make the most of these connections to understand and learn from one another.

### What would you say as the 3 most important things you have learnt from SL?

1) The homestay experience in Kyrgyzstan taught me to be thankful for the things that I own, the services and exposure I can easily access as one living in Hong Kong.

2) I believe the leadership skills I learnt from the SL experience, such as active listening and being observant can be applied to my workplace in the future.

3) It is also important to serve others with empathy in order to truly understand their needs instead of designing activities that only interest ourselves.

### What do you think is/are the keys to making SL experience meaningful to your school life?

Rather than taking the SL project as an assignment, I suggest thinking of it as a campaign or an event that speaks who you are as one of the members of a student committee or student association. I believe it is always easier for us to build a greater sense of ownership and passion for projects that represent ourselves.



*Maggie posing with other participants at programme's graduation ceremony*



*Maggie delivering a workshop to the local children in Kyrgyzstan*



*Kyrgyz women teaching Maggie's team the traditional Nuno felting for cultural exchange*

### If you had a time machine, what would you do to make a difference in your SL experience at PolyU?

Given that Kyrgyzstan students at primary, secondary or university levels have limited chances to travel outside their home country, I would love to do more to broaden their horizons. We did try to build their skills and interest in understanding foreign cultures by teaching them Mandarin, English, and Tai Chi (a form of Chinese martial arts) during the trip. But on an individual basis, I thought I could have done more than just befriending them on Instagram.

Have you participated in any activities related to community service, global citizenship, or leadership after SL experience? (If so, what motivates you to do so?)

I registered myself as a volunteer on *HandsOn*. I discovered it as an online platform that empowers people in Hong Kong to volunteer by enabling them to identify service opportunities and have greater accuracy and ease on reporting attendance. I have been taking part in services that I found from this platform from time to time since then. Looking back, most of the activities I attended were related to children services.

The greatest motivation for me to carry on with this practice after SL experience, I guess, is I value the opportunities to meet people from diverse walks of life in different services.

Do you have any personal goals in community engagement/ community services?

I wish I could continue to engage in community services after entering the job market.

What do you think would motivate you to take part in community service after graduation?

There is always a quote in my mind though I have no ideas where does it come from, "there is always a shortage of hands despite the abundance of resources in any kinds of services".

If you were asked to share your tips with fellow PolyU students who (a) are going to take part in SL; (b) are taking part in SL; (c) have taken part in SL, what would you say to them?

(a) Enjoy the process for there won't be a second chance in your life like that

(b) Contribute more to your team by always "walking an extra mile" and you will gain something beyond your expectation

(c) Keep the spirit of self-reflection alive and you will be able to make every day counts



Maggie with her Certificate of Outstanding Student Award 2020

### About Outstanding Students Award

Each year, the Outstanding Students Award Scheme of PolyU recognises the achievements of full-time final-year students who have excelled in their academic and non-academic endeavours, rewarding students at three different levels. Outstanding students selected for the award at the departmental level go on to compete for a similar award at the Faculty/School level. The Most Outstanding PolyU Student of the Year is then selected from those who have received the Outstanding Student Award of their Faculty/ School.





## #WeArePolyU - Service-Learning Series



Service-Learning is often a life-changing experience for PolyU students and staff. Watch the first episode of our SL series and be inspired by the story of **Kenneth Lo** who was a PolyU Year 1 undergraduate student when he first took part in Service-Learning activities back in 2006. Due to his life-changing SL experience, not only did he give up his original plan of joining a multi-national corporation, he joined PolyU's SL team after obtaining his MPhil degree. He hopes to inspire more students in the spirit of serving others.



Watch the second episode in our SL series to learn about the inspirational stories of PolyU students **Michelle Sandhika** and **George Siu**, who took part in SL activities in the past two years.





# “STEAMing” Up Holistic Teaching and Learning in Vietnam

To nurture students as service leaders who practice the ethos of SL in the PolyU community beyond the graduation requirement, the University has solicited multiple funding to support students in designing their own SL initiatives. This article offers a close-up on one of the re-enacted projects supported by the PolyU University Fellows Association - Student Development Sponsorship Scheme that focuses on delivering fun Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) education to kids in Vietnam.



The STEAM team's service proposal

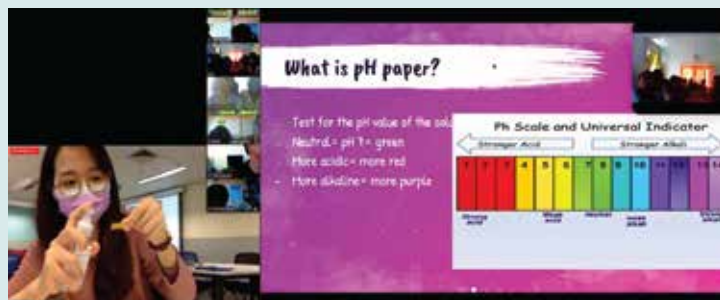
According to the leader of the Vietnam STEAM Project, Summer Ho (Fresh graduate, Air Transport Engineering), the idea was formed when they learned about the challenges faced by children in their service location, Tra Vinh Province, a rural area in the Mekong Delta region. The industrial and socio-economic development of the Province lags behind the national average. Children there receive formal primary and secondary education but have limited exposure to experiential learning. The project team seek to lift the spirits of these students by bringing a holistic Science learning experience that filled with hands-on experiments, interactive workshops, and competitions.

Based on their fruitful inaugural service in Summer 2019, they planned to collaborate again with ECO Vietnam Group (EVG), a local non-profit-making organisation experienced in hosting international service teams to promote sustainable development for the community, to conduct STEAM workshops at their community center over a nine-day visit in Summer 2020. The plan of physical travel, unfortunately, had been distorted by the coronavirus. After much discussion and re-organisation among the project members and the community partner, the team switched to delivering online STEAM training in March-April 2021.



Online workshop on programming with Micro:bit

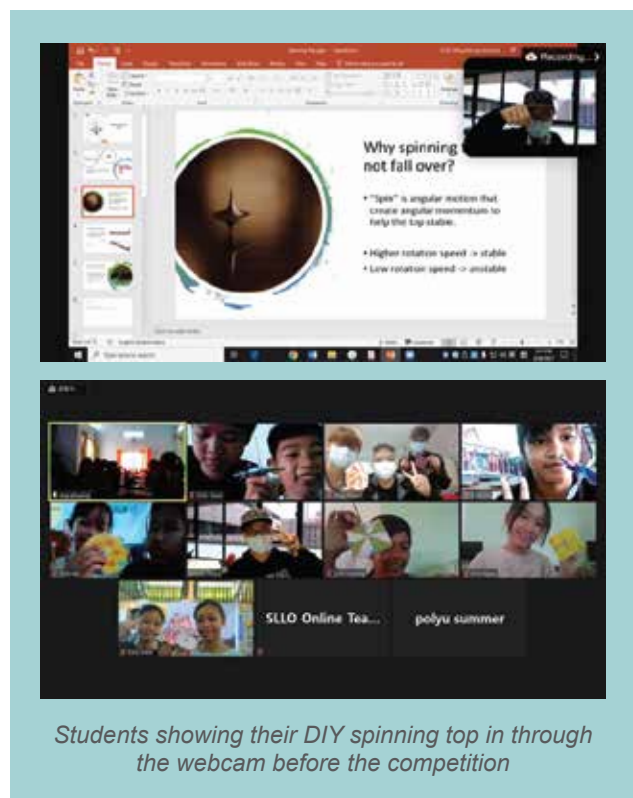
In the end, the team transformed the service trip into eight online workshops themed on basic and advanced programming, chemical acidity, spinning top design, meteorology, coding, nutrition, math and critical thinking respectively.



*Experiment demonstration in the online workshop entitled "Acid & Alkali in Daily Life"*

Each of the two-hour workshops was carefully structured into four parts to bring out the learning outcomes in bite-size. The STEAM team instructors typically started their workshops with an ice-breaking game to arouse the students' interests. It was then followed by a lecture to unpack the relevant theories. After that, students were given 30-40 minutes to experiment or build products with the tools prepared and shipped by the STEAM team to the service site such as the BBC Micro:bit Go, the spinning top DIY kit, and the pH papers with guidance. The lessons usually ended with the students' product showcase or a competition that summarize their learning progress in great momentum.

The Vietnam STEAM project 2020 was a success to both the project team and the community partner given the attentive faces, interesting products, creative questions, and laughter shared in the Zoom classrooms. To the STEAM team, the achievement is a stamp of recognition in how much they had overcome in this exceptional period: most of the volunteers recruited in 2019 had withdrawn from the trip due to uncertainty, some core members had graduated and started working full-time, workshop plans had to be rewritten in a short time to facilitate online learning, the shipping of workshop materials was risky due to unforeseeable business suspension, etc. Having delivered the services to their best against all odds, the team members reflected that they had not only learned an invaluable lesson on preparing for contingencies and embracing flexibility. They had also secured a stronger bonding as a self-driven and better organized team. Unanimously, they expressed an enthusiasm to carry on with the project to disseminate the light and joy of all-rounded STEAM education. We look forward to future endeavors of such a committed team!



*Students showing their DIY spinning top in through the webcam before the competition*





# How do teachers conceive reflection in Service-Learning?

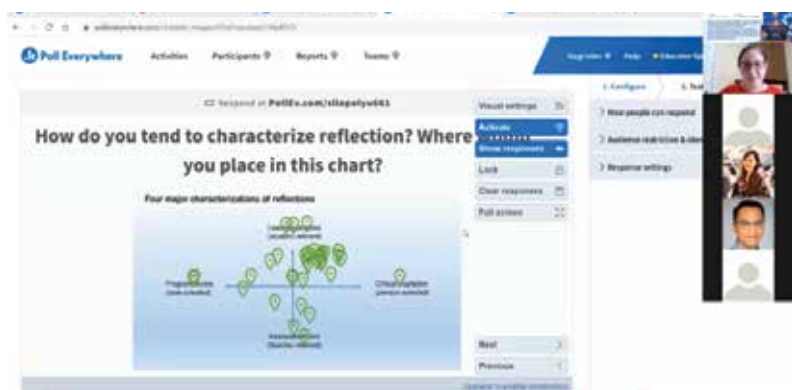


Reflection is the backbone of SL as it helps synthesise students' academic and service experiences into a meaningful whole and promotes intellectual and personal growth. Students engage in different kinds of reflective practices through SL subjects, and it is the subject teacher who designs and facilitates these reflective activities. In view of the significant role played by faculty in facilitating student reflection, the SLLO dedicated an online research seminar to a deep dive into "How Teachers Conceive Reflection in Service-Learning" on 23 March 2021. The active participation of over 70 SL practitioners from within and beyond PolyU proved a shared interest among participants to better understand the concept of reflection and enhance reflective practices.

The speaker, Dr Rina Camus, walked her participants through the complex topic by first clarifying the meaning of "reflection" in SL literature. She then explained a recently published study by SLLO colleagues about how PolyU faculty approach "reflection" in SL. As one of the paper's key findings, Dr Camus shared a framework summarizing four conceptual domains that emerged from participants of the study, namely, reflection as *mindful practice*, as *transformative learning*, as *evaluation exercise* and as *articulated thinking*. She elaborated distinctive characteristics of each domain, showing sample statements and drawing implications on students' learning.



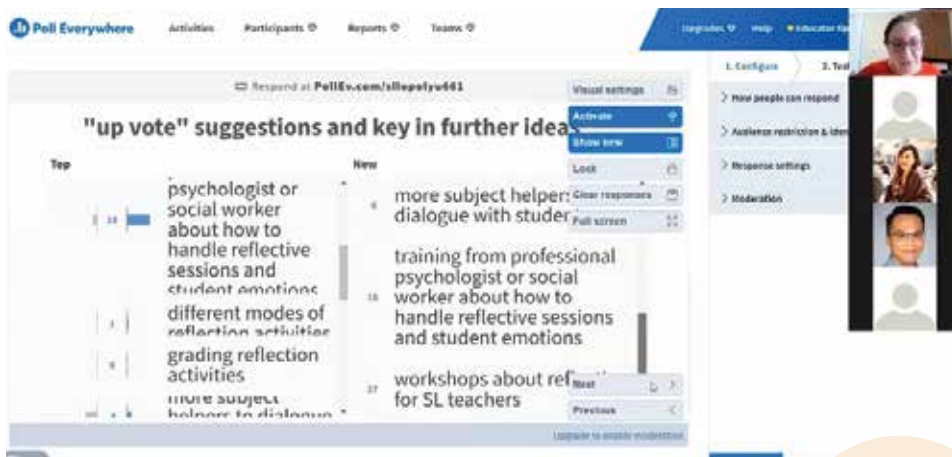
The four domains of SL reflection conceived by PolyU interviewees in the study of SLLO



Participants located how they conceive reflection on the interactive voting plane

With the help of an interactive interface, participants also had the chance to "position" themselves in any of the four conceptual domains. The exercise gave participants a glimpse of their inclinations towards reflection and also provoked them to consider whether their *idea* and *practice* of reflection fall under the same domain.

In the concluding segment, Dr. Camus explained that the four-fold framework is only an aid to check where one stands in relation to the service-learning ideal of reflection as transformative learning rather than a precise metrics to segregate good approaches to reflection from bad ones. Finally, Dr Camus invited participants to join a live poll in which they could vote for/against and raise suggestions about to help SL faculty with reflective activities they design for students. The most popular suggestions voted by participants were a toolkit on reflection for teachers, and ideas for motivating students to actively participate in reflective sessions. The seminar ended with a Q & A forum.



Participants voted for how they would like to be supported in improving reflective practices in SL



The seminar was positively reviewed with 100% of the participants rating it 4 or above (rating scale: 5 = excellent; 1 = poor). Some participants especially appreciated how the speaker included “introspective pauses” to help them relate the seminar content with their own experiences. The video recording and slides can be viewed at <https://polyu.hk/eUrDA>.

With the momentum built up by the session, SLLO head Dr Grace Ngai announced a planned series of research seminars this year to drum up scholarly and practical discussions about SL. The next research seminar will be in May. Be sure to keep an eye on details of upcoming seminar and spark the conversations with your SL expertise!



#### Reference

Camus, R.M., Ngai, G., Kwan, K.P., Lau, J.H.Y., & Chan, S. “Knowing where we Stand: Mapping Teachers’ Conception of Reflection in Service-Learning”. *Innovative Higher Education* (January 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-020-09534-6>





# [Pilot-run] Service-Learning Scholarship Scheme (Capstone / Final Year Project)

PolyU is committed to inspiring its students to not only pursue academic excellence, but also serve the community with their professional knowledge. In the academic year 2021/22, we will pilot a Service-Learning Scholarship Scheme to encourage final year students to channel their passion for service into their SL Capstone / Final Year Project.

SLLO has been offering the Service-Learning Scholarship Scheme since 2013 to recognise meritorious students with outstanding performance in SL subjects and encourage them to continue their involvement in community service. Over the past seven years, 576 students have been awarded the scholarship. Some of them have returned to help out as student leaders or assistants in SL subjects. Others have initiated and delivered service projects of their own.

With almost a decade of academic SL behind us, we hope to facilitate students and teachers who wish to move service to the community beyond the mandatory SL requirement with tangible support. In essence, we will provide funding to final year students to develop innovative and impactful research projects with SL components. Through designing prototypes or conducting in-depth studies that addresses real-life problems faced by disadvantaged communities, it is hoped that students can leverage their knowledge to drive positive changes in our society in a fruitful and fulfilling manner.

	Local Project		International Project
	(Individual)	(Group)	(Individual)
<b>Project Grant</b>	Up to <b>\$5,000</b> per project	Up to <b>\$15,000</b> per project	Up to <b>HK\$100,000</b> per project (travelling costs can be covered)
<b>SL Scholarship</b>	HK\$ 8,000 per awardee		

Details



<http://gofile.me/3caCM/5oOiyFG53>

Application



<https://polyu.hk/BEMIs>

**Application  
Deadline  
30 SEPT**

**ENQUIRY**

[sl.scholarship@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:sl.scholarship@polyu.edu.hk)

**2766 4376**