

Special issue: The Co-curriculum Learning Outside the Classroom 課堂外的學習

Enhancing Your Competitive Edge Through Outside Class Learning



On 22nd September, the University Grants Committee held a major Forum, bringing together Hong Kong's universities, employers and education planners. The subject of the debate was "nurturing graduates for the future" and considered the ultimate goals or purpose of a university education.

The first Guest Speaker of the day was Dr Victor Fung (馮國經博士). Dr Fung is the Group Chairman, Li & Fung group of companies and Council Chairman of The University of Hong Kong. Himself a graduate of MIT (Engineering) and Harvard Business School (PhD), what did he have to say about nurturing graduates?

"From an employer's point of view, the right attitude is far more important than the right degree.Graduates,

no matter how brilliant they are on paper, will soon run into trouble without the right attitude towards their profession."

Dr Fung understands that universities are not simply a training ground for future employees. A university should provide a full and rounded education, integrative learning by the *whole* person. Increasingly, we recognize that what is learned outside the classroom, in the co-curriculum, gives a graduate his or her competitive edge. Of course, there are the core skills to be achieved: a good command of English and Putonghua, IT skills, the ability to communicate and work effectively as part of a team. But there are other, equally important, skills to be acquired: confidence, maturity, a sense of responsibility, creative and original thinking, leadership, negotiation skills, to name but a few.

Are there any qualities that Dr Fung values above the others? Something which Hong Kong students really need to develop if they are to prepare for life and a career in the fast lane? Without hesitation, Dr Fung identifies two qualities: internationalisation and creativity.

Dr Fung emphasised the need for HK students to be more international and cosmopolitan. But how can this be achieved? Among others, "[international exchange] programmes help dissolve cultural barriers, students are able to relate to people in a more positive manner, they gain a very important exposure to the world and develop a more independent way of thinking." Also, it is vital that "students be aware of what is going on beyond the confines of their own city."

What sorts of skills do employers, universities, and students themselves prize?

The ability to adapt to an ever changing workplace – quick thinkers who are flexible, versatile and keen to learn – creative – original – self-motivated – practical – hard working – with a strong character – a determination to succeed – the right attitude – international awareness – the global perspective – multilingual with a good command of English and Putonghua – sensitive and open to different cultures – knowledgeable about the local community, and the culture and lifestyle of the Mainland – broad horizons – cosmopolitan – the ability to communicate ideas succinctly and effectively – IT skills – multi-skilled – responsible and ethical – problem solving skills – confidence – well-rounded individuals – eager to take on new challenges – competitive spirit – team work – independent judgment – lateral thinking – facing challenges – current affairs

More about core competencies: www.hku.hk/cepc/NEW/forstudent/Q1212.html

Dr Fung stressed that creativity is power. *"They say that knowledge is power. But today knowledge is available at the touch of a button to anyone who has access to the Internet. Knowledge for its own sake is no longer enough. Power lies in the ability to analyse and use that knowledge. Today it is creativity that is power."*

Creativity is coming to be valued as the essential ingredient in change and progress. It is coming to be valued above knowledge, because knowledge today is so widely accessible. And it is the task of universities to encourage and nurture creativity. This is what makes the students of this generation unique. They are being taught new and innovative ways of thinking. This is essential if Hong Kong is to be successful in the 21st century."

