

FRONT COVER

EDUCATION MATTERS

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COVER STORY

An Online Solution with Lasting Results

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FOREWORD

Dear Friends of the Faculty of Education,

It's my great pleasure to welcome you to a new volume of Education Matters!

We're publishing this issue just in time to coincide with the start of the new academic year. We have finally resumed face-to-face teaching and we are delighted to be able to welcome our students back on campus. Hopefully, you are also excited about a brand new start and what it will bring.

In this issue's cover story, we are thrilled to share with you how our teleclinic, a means to conduct speech therapy online, has been able to bring benefits to our students and patients. There might have been disruptions to the speech therapy curriculum and to treatment, but our colleagues and students were able to creatively embrace the challenges and fully utilise the teleclinic, so as to ensure the continuity of patient care.

I'm also proud to see how our colleagues have been working together to innovate and transform teaching. They have innovative ideas and brilliant solutions for tackling difficult issues, and are able to bring them to fruition. You can find out more about how they have been improving community lives in the following pages.

Despite travel limitations, our students have also taken the initiative to begin a virtual collaboration – resulting in lasting friendships – with their counterparts at the National Institute of Education, Singapore. For our alumni, I hope their stories demonstrate the essence and true meaning of education: to inspire and empower the future generation, eventually making the world a better place.

Please sit back, relax and enjoy this issue of Education Matters. I'm sure you'll be impressed by what the Faculty has achieved.

Professor A. Lin Goodwin
Dean

An Online Solution with Lasting Results

The disruptions to learning triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic have posed significant challenges for clinical programmes.

Students in the Bachelor of Science in Speech and Hearing Sciences programme, for instance, need to see patients and interact with them to develop core competencies. When social distancing makes that impossible, it threatens both their education and the patient services they provide.

Fortunately, teachers in the programme have devised a solution that has not only seen the students through the crisis but uncovered unexpected benefits.

Following positive reports from other countries that use teleclinics to treat patients in outlying areas, they launched a teleclinic on ZOOM. This meant that students could continue to see patients remotely even in sensitive facilities such as nursing homes, while teachers could continue to assess them, and patients could continue to receive treatment.

Some patients, especially those with mobility issues, reported that the teleclinic made it easier for them to access therapy. Students also appreciated not having to travel long journeys to see patients. The teleclinic also meant that masks did not need to be worn. As a result, students and their teachers were able to observe patients' faces and mouths directly for assessment and treatment.

The outcome has been so good that preparations are now underway to make the teleclinic a regular part of the speech therapy curriculum, with support from the University Grants Committee's Special Grant for Strategic Development of Virtual Teaching and Learning and a Teaching Development Grant.

“Originally, we thought this would be a temporary solution and that we would resume fully face-to-face classes as soon as possible. But the teleclinic gave us new insights into benefits that we had not expected at all,” said Dr Carol To, Associate Professor in the Faculty's Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences (CDIS).

The initiative started as an experiment in 2019, when a teleclinic was arranged for paediatric patients in Mainland China. The potential wider significance of this experience became apparent in early 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic spread to Hong Kong and the city went into lockdown. All venues that were usually the site of clinical practice for Year 3-5 students were closed, including nursing homes, elderly day care centres, schools and kindergartens, the programme's own clinic, and the University itself. This meant no face-to-face contact was possible.

The teleclinic team swung into action to provide therapy for patients via ZOOM in their homes, but by the team's own admission, it was a primitive arrangement at first. Participants had to make do with their own tablet computers and phones and there were many technical issues to deal with.

As it became apparent that the pandemic would not be short-lived, the team gave priority to securing workable devices for patients. With funding from the HKU COVID Relief Fund and a generous donation from Dr David Sin Wai-kin (冼為堅博士), they purchased iPads and data cards so that patients had the necessary hardware and internet access to participate in online therapy. However, the implementation

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was still not entirely smooth sailing, particularly for elderly patients, so Ms Ada Chu, Assistant Lecturer in CDIS, and her team spent a lot of time teaching them how to use the technology.

“The most challenging part was teaching them to use ZOOM and helping them remotely to solve technical issues such as no sound or WiFi connection or how to charge the iPad. Especially among the elderly, their computer literacy is not high,” she said.

“We also had to teach students how to adapt materials to fit this service delivery mode. Usually, they would borrow a stack of cards or objects from our resource room for face-to-face sessions. With the teleclinic, they had to individualise treatment and assessment materials for every patient and create PowerPoints. It involved a bit more work for students, but they were able to save on travelling time.”

The teleclinic worked very well in specific situations. Stroke patients can have difficulty walking and have often needed to arrange special transport to get to clinics. Doing sessions at home on ZOOM made everything more accessible for them. Similarly, patients with Parkinson’s disease also felt the remote approach was easier.

However, for elderly patients in nursing homes and young paediatric patients, some adaptations were needed.

Elderly patients in nursing homes are often frail and suffer from cognitive impairment such as dementia. Asking them to focus on a screen while sitting by themselves was just not feasible. Ms Chu thus came up with a novel solution – a hybrid of the teleclinic and face-to-face engagement.

The students’ clinical supervisor was sent to nursing homes, a visit which the homes could accommodate because it was only one person and not a group of students. The supervisor would engage with the staff at the nursing home to discuss patients’ care. Then support patients during ZOOM sessions in which students conducted assessment and treatment.

“The populations in nursing homes are the potential clients of our graduates when they become speech therapists. If it had not been for the COVID-19 pandemic, our Year 4 students would have been at the nursing homes themselves. This newer mode of teleclinic means they not only get to work with the clients, but they are exposed to different institutional settings and other healthcare professionals, rather than just the home environment. It allows them to have the same clinical experience that they would have had without the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Dr Karen Chan, Associate Professor in CDIS, who leads the teleclinic team.

Young children aged below six also have difficulty sitting still in front of the computer and focusing. The teleclinic was tested on them when kindergartens were closed for several months, but it was found to be unsuitable. The focus then turned to training their parents, who were given workshops on facilitating their children’s language development, such as expanding or extending verbal interactions. When kindergarten classes resumed, so did face-to-face therapy for them – which also meant students got the necessary experience in managing child clients and the environment in which they are treated.

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With the dust having settled on these trial-and-error experiments, the next step is to consolidate successful practices and make the teleclinic part of the clinical practicum.

“Over the next two years, we are going to solidify these experiences and develop more systematic materials for clinical supervisors and students, and very likely arrange on-site support on the client side, too,” Dr Chan said. “We believe there are benefits to the teleclinic, and it will be in our students’ best interests if they can develop the skills to conduct teleclinic in future.”

Dr To added: “It is like a new normal, and I’m sure they will do teleclinic when they graduate.”

Dr Chan sees the benefits multiplying. For instance, teachers in kindergartens and schools could find it easier to participate in their students’ therapy sessions because they would not have to leave the school, and the sessions would be easier to timetable. Clinics in Mainland China could be carried out through the year. “Students could have a lesson in the morning and a teleclinic in Mainland China in the afternoon,” she said. There is also the possibility of linking up with overseas institutions to do online exchanges to increase students’ awareness of the global nature of speech and hearing problems.”

The Faculty is also looking at new technologies to streamline the work of the teleclinic, such as a platform which the clinical instructor, patients and students could all access offline and use for communication. Currently, the instructor is the go-between for all communications. Videos demonstrating exercises and other treatment materials could also be uploaded for patients’ easy reference.

Having said all that, face-to-face will remain a necessary part of training and treatment, not only because the elderly, young children and hearing impaired have difficulty working through ZOOM. Being able to touch patients’ faces and assess their muscle tone and strength is important for assessment. One possibility could be for patients to come to clinics for assessment, do the training at home, and return to the clinic afterwards to assess the progress made.

Dr Chan said they plan to introduce the teleclinic module in early 2022, having proven its worth in enabling students to get the necessary experience for their degrees. “We are fortunate that we didn’t have to delay anyone from graduating. They met all the regular milestones in terms of progression and graduation requirements. The last couple of years have been very stressful for students, so this is a happy outcome.”

TEACHING & LEARNING

Breaking Down the Barriers

Professionals in schools tend to work within their disciplines – teachers teach, while therapists take students into rooms to administer speech and language therapy or occupational, physical or psychological therapy, and there is often only minimal contact between them. Similarly, training within tertiary institutions has tended to stick to disciplinary boundaries. However, it is not the case anymore.

During a chance discussion in an elevator two years ago, Dr Elizabeth Barrett, Assistant Dean (Teaching and Learning) and Dr Anita Wong, Associate Professor in the Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences (CDIS) realised that they taught the same topic to their classes, despite having different specialities. Dr Barrett teaches courses related to cognitive psychology and early childhood education, while Dr Wong is a teacher and scholar in developmental psychology and speech therapy.

“We asked ourselves, why are we teaching students in silos? Why are we not bringing them together to learn, especially as they will ultimately work in the same settings?” said Dr Barrett. Added Dr Wong: “In that moment, we decided to do something together.”

With funding from a Teaching Development Grant (TDG) awarded in May 2020, they developed a course on interprofessional education for speech therapy students in the Bachelor of Science in Speech and Hearing Sciences [BSc(Sp&HearSc)] programme. The aim was to prepare students to work with other professionals in educational settings to support children with special educational needs (SEN). Kindergarten teachers studying the Bachelor of Science in Applied Child Development BSc(ACD) programme were also invited to join a session of the course.

The focus on educational settings matters because on-site rehabilitation services for children with SEN have been expanded in kindergartens, and primary schools now have government funding to have a speech-language therapist on staff. This means more job opportunities for speech therapy students in mainstream schools. Interprofessional collaboration, however, is not well-established in mainstream schools, unlike in special schools.

“There’s a gap in the extent to which teachers, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educational psychologists and social workers work as a team in the school setting. Collaboration needs to be further enhanced and we think it would be helpful if they could train together and learn from each other,” Dr Wong explained.

In the course, speech therapy students learn about the different professionals they will encounter and their roles and responsibilities. They also engage in a simulation activity using four cases devised by their instructors that reflect Hong Kong school settings. Over the past year, students were also involved in helping to create 13 videos featuring interviews with different professionals and parents about their training and theoretical foundations, how they work in teams, examples of children they work with, and their reflections on the barriers and successful stories of interprofessional practice. The long-term aim of the course is to bridge the gap for both speech therapy students and pre-service teachers.

The BSc(ACD) students join in the final session for a discussion on how teachers and therapists can work together to support SEN children.

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“We had a very engaging and exciting lesson on this. The BSc(ACD) students said the speech therapy students had so many great skills and ideas of things to do in the classroom and small groups, while the speech therapy students were impressed by the kindergarten teachers’ knowledge about child development and surprised by the demands on their time in kindergartens. The speech therapy students now have to be aware of that when recommending how teachers can support children with SEN,” Dr Barrett added. “A lot of collaboration can come from just opening these communication pathways.”

Pathways are also opening up beyond the Faculty of Education. Speech therapy students were invited earlier this year to participate in an interprofessional education module on dementia organised by HKU’s Faculty of Medicine. They worked with medicine, nursing and pharmacy students in teams to devise a care plan for a patient. Their plans were critiqued by a cross-disciplinary panel of experts from the University, including Dr Karen Chan, Associate Professor in CDIS, who is teaching a course on interprofessional practice in medical settings to the BSc(Sp&HearSc) students. Dr Barrett and Dr Wong also participated in a separate module on developmental delay, which speech therapy students will join in the academic year of 2021-22.

“It is a lot of fun bringing together people who have different experiences, but at the end of the day, the ultimate beneficiaries of interprofessional education will be the children with SEN who are supported by teachers, social workers, speech-language therapists, educational psychologists, etc.,” Dr Wong remarked.

The two scholars are also engaging with more collaborators within the Faculty to widen the impact of their work. They are working with Dr Patcy Yeung, Associate Professor in the Academic Unit of Teacher Education and Learning Leadership, on the TDG, and they supported four students in securing spots in the Laidlaw Undergraduate Research and Leadership Programme, which equips students with research and leadership skills to help them pursue their academic and professional aspirations beyond their current course of study. The students will survey social workers, kindergarten teachers and speech-language therapists from across Hong Kong institutions on interprofessional education, and interview speech therapists about interprofessional collaborative practice in educational and medical settings.

“We need the evidence to support this initiative. It is not just important for pre-service training but also for Hong Kong in the wider context,” Dr Wong said.

Dr Barrett hoped that other teachers in the Faculty and across the University will also see the benefits of interprofessional training for their students. While scheduling and lack of time have been barriers in the past, she pointed out that even short encounters, like those experienced with the Faculty of Medicine, have value. The interprofessional practice videos created by the students are also freely available for others in the Faculty to use. In addition, the cases developed for the new course will soon be available for all instructors at HKU through the TDG platform.

Dr Barrett noted that in-service professionals who provided input to the courses have been enthusiastic because they see the value and need for interprofessional training.

“We invite any colleagues or people working in pre-service training of professionals in educational settings, who want to develop this further, to join us. We’re eager to work together!” she said.

Blending the Medium with the Message

The Faculty's students have grown up surrounded by the fruits of technology, from mobile phones, laptops and tablets to social media, YouTube and Google. So, when it comes to applying these tools in their teaching, it should be second nature to them, right? Not quite, says Dr Lin Chin-Hsi, Associate Professor in the Academic Unit of Teacher Education and Learning Leadership (TELL).

Dr Lin teaches Chinese language teaching and researches online language teaching and learning. He has found that pre-service teachers divide down the middle when using technology: some are keen while others are reluctant. But in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the reality is that, however they feel, they need to come to grips with the new tools before they conduct their teaching practica.

“Teachers themselves have learnt to read in a traditional way, so they are not familiar with how technology can be used to teach Chinese reading. And while their digital literacy has been improving over the past few years, knowing how to use technology is different from knowing how to use it to teach reading. We see many teachers and student teachers struggling with teaching reading online.

“While the teaching mode is expected to return to face-to-face, online learning will not go away after the pandemic. The trend will continue, so now is the time to prepare future educators for the next generation of education,” he said.

Dr Lin and his collaborator Dr Hui Sau Yan, Lecturer in TELL are leading the way with a programme that has been funded by the University Grants Committee's Special Grant for Strategic Development of Virtual Teaching and Learning as well as by a Teaching Development Grant. The programme is designed for Year 3 and Year 4 students of the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education in Language Education (Chinese) programme. Students will be taught how to teach Chinese language both face-to-face and online – they will be presented with general theories about language teaching and given opportunities to apply what they learn in micro-teaching sessions at the end of each topic through role modelling, interactive collaboration in groups, and demonstrating what they have learnt. A key component will be feedback and reflection, with students watching videos of themselves and selecting a moment where they think they can do better.

The lessons about online teaching will focus on using technology as more than an add-on and trying to match specific technologies with pedagogical goals. For example, Dr Lin points out that a lot of online reading instruction is teacher-led, without much opportunity built in for students to respond – even quizzes do not involve much interaction. But there are some pedagogical approaches, such as reading circles, which may be equally effective online because they use social interaction to improve language learning and literacy.

“Simply teaching student teachers about the technological tools won't work. We are advocating a combination of technology, pedagogy and content knowledge. You need all three together when planning lessons. Otherwise, if you rely only on the technology, it would be like trying to build a house with just a hammer,” he said.

Role modelling is essential in that regard. With that in mind, Dr Lin and his team are developing four lesson plan templates on teaching Chinese reading online.

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“We want to do more than adapting teaching to online. We want to see if there are any unique advantages to doing things online that you can’t do face-to-face. Technology should amplify or refine teaching, not replace what we are doing right now,” he said.

The benefits of this approach for both student teachers and their students can be found in Dr Lin’s previous research on online teaching.

One study he co-authored, published in 2017, showed that technological tools could indeed improve learning. First-grade children in rural China learning English used the Papa application under parental supervision to test their knowledge and understanding. They demonstrated much better fluency than a control group that did not use the app.

Two studies published last year showed that reflection and instructional design had a positive impact on pre-service teachers’ attitudes and knowledge about using technology in their learning, and that well-designed online learning can improve student outcomes. The latter study involved 919 students enrolled in online high-school classes in the USA. “Our findings suggest that instructors and course designers should tie the design of multimedia-based resources closely to their pedagogical goals rather than using them only as a way to engage students,” he said.

Dr Lin worked at a university in the USA before joining HKU and noted that attitudes towards online learning were more supportive there than in Asia. In some places, high school students were expected to complete a couple of online classes in order to graduate.

“Here, it’s very different. Online learning is deemed inferior to the face-to-face setting. The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to do more online and move outside comfort zones. But if given a choice, teachers still want to go back to face-to-face. So now the issue is, are we going to throw out all these tools? No, we can still capitalise on the technology and integrate it with the pedagogy,” he said.

He sees the issue as critical to education in the coming years. “We can’t say that the technology will dominate, but it is inevitable that it will be used. Teachers need to learn how to use these tools that are new to them.

“We’re not saying our pedagogy is the best one, but it is research-based, and it gives students a jumpstart. Does it work all the time? Not necessarily, but the reflection skills they gain will help them to adapt to new settings.”

New Tool Puts Focus on Classroom Talk

Some two-thirds of classroom time is spent talking – teacher-to-student, student-to-teacher and student-to-student. The quality of the discussions, therefore, matters to learning. A new tool that can visualise that engagement and help in-service teachers and student-teachers identify areas of improvement has been developed by Dr Chen Gaowei, Associate Professor in the Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences.

“In recent years, researchers in the East and West have come to realise that teachers speak too much in the classroom, doing two-thirds or even three-quarters of the talking. It is like a monologue, not a dialogue. This means students have less opportunity to articulate their thinking and to share, discuss, argue and reason about academic topics, which is fundamental to student learning and skill development,” Dr Chen said.

Dr Chen’s Classroom Discourse Analyser (CDA) is a video-visualisation software that addresses the problem. The platform has been under development for several years and recently got a boost to scale up for a wider audience with funding from the HKSAR Government’s Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living and the Tin Ka Ping Foundation.

Videos of classroom teaching are uploaded to the platform, where the dialogue is transcribed and coded according to how much the teacher and students say and when they say it. This is then translated into a chart using bubbles, with the size of the bubbles showing how much talking was done by each person and when they spoke. The larger the bubble, the more they talked. The coding also indicates the nature of the dialogue: for instance, whether it consisted of “talk moves”, such as asking a student to say more.

Alongside the graph is the transcript. When teachers click on a bubble, they are taken to the speech content at that moment. For example, if they click on a bubble next to a student’s name at the 23-minute mark on the chart, the transcript will automatically scroll to that point.

But most importantly, the visualisation tool lets individual teachers see just how much they talk in class.

“The purpose of the visualisation is to help teachers navigate through videos of lessons so they can reflect on how to improve and how to have more productive classroom dialogue,” Dr Chen explained.

So far, teachers who have used the visualisation tool as part of Dr Chen’s research have reported that the experience has been illuminating.

“We interviewed some teacher-participants who said they had never thought about their lessons in terms of classroom talk. They thought that they didn’t speak much in class and that they gave their students a lot of opportunities to talk. However, after seeing the visualisation, the teacher-participants realised they spoke too much. Some even spoke more than 95 per cent of the words said in the classroom. The tool helped to make them aware that their students had much less opportunity to speak than they had thought,” he said.

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Currently, the CDA still requires quite a lot of hands-on work. The speech recognition and automated coding that underpin the platform are not yet sufficiently accurate and require checking by humans against the video. Dr Chen's team has been doing that for various professional development programmes he has run for groups of in-service teachers ranging from 20-50 in number. The largest group was in Shanghai, where mathematics teachers participated in a one-year programme involving five workshops, in which they used the platform and then met to discuss areas of improvement.

“We found the platform was effective in improving their teaching and student learning. Students even had higher academic scores after their teachers used the platform,” he said.

The next stage is to make the platform easier for individual teachers to use so that they can upload a video of their class and get automatic feedback anytime, anywhere. Teachers who are not part of research projects or workshops can still have a go at using the visualisation tool on their own, but they must check the accuracy themselves – a process that, Dr Chen pointed out, is conducive to reflection. Over the next two years, he and his team will improve the CDA's accuracy so that teachers can use the tool with minimal support to aid their professional development.

Dr Chen is optimistic that these advances can be achieved. When he started, he was using an Excel version for the visualisation, but soon developed it into a dedicated website. He has a background in information engineering and educational technology and has brought software engineers and content developers onto his team. His co-investigators on the CDA project include scholars from the Faculty, the Education University of Hong Kong and a former academic from HKU's Faculty of Science.

Colleagues in other Hong Kong institutions, Mainland China and the USA have also used the tool for their research. Dr Chen hopes it can even be developed so that students themselves can use it to see how they behave and talk in the classroom and reflect on their learning there.

“Students in the 21st century need skills like critical thinking, creativity and collaboration, and the classroom is an important place for developing these. When teachers have a dialogue with students and students discuss with each other, they can develop their skills and be better prepared for the future,” Dr Chen said.

The CDA can help by making teachers aware of just how much they are helping or hindering students in their classroom talk.

Game for a Change

Online learning has accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic and given a boost to research by Dr Timothy Hew, Associate Dean (Research Higher Degrees) who, after several years studying massive open online courses (MOOCs), is now zeroing in on how to motivate students in the virtual environment.

“When we move everything from face-to-face learning to fully online, one of the biggest challenges we have is how to engage students. The worst thing an instructor can encounter is a screen where most students switch off their cameras – you don’t know if students are paying attention to what you are saying or doing something else, like looking at their phones or watching a movie. It makes the instructor question what they are doing,” he said.

Given that reality, he proposed using gamification to motivate students and self-regulated learning to improve student engagement. This was done by getting students to set goals and monitor and reflect on their learning. The project has received funding support from the University Grants Committee’s Special Grant for Strategic Development of Virtual Teaching and Learning.

Dr Hew’s investigations are focused on his classes. When learning went entirely online in January 2020, he and his research assistant started to monitor and measure student behaviour. The switch to online classes was done in a hurry, so there was not much time to develop special materials or approaches that would be appropriate for this new environment. It soon became clear that trying to replicate face-to-face classes with minimal adaptation could be a soul-crushing experience for both student and teacher.

“I would ask students questions but hardly anyone would volunteer to answer – they would just look at me. I ended up having to call names out like in primary school – ‘John, can you please answer’, ‘Mary, can you please answer’” – this despite the fact that up to 20 percent of the students’ grades was for online participation.

The silver lining of this experience was that it motivated Dr Hew to find solutions. When he offered the class again in January 2021, he kept the same content and participation marks, but gamified the learning. As a result, participation shot up.

Gamification involves using elements of games, such as leader boards, badges and a narrative structure, to motivate students to learn. (It is not the same as game-based learning, in which actual games are devised to convey knowledge about topics.) Dr Hew’s 2021 class was told that they could earn points for completing a certain number of pre-class assignments, such as watching a short video or interacting on a discussion forum, and these points would go towards badges. The more badges students accumulated, the more marks they could earn. In other words, students were told that they had to work for participation marks and given clear instructions on how to earn those marks.

“The badges gave them a sense of achievement and progression towards their goal. We also made use of a leader board. People like to compare themselves with others – to see who has acquired badges and how many. To my surprise, although students are adult learners, they were very engaged with earning badges. They did not want to be left behind.

RESEARCH

“We are still analysing the data but, overall, we have found the use of gamification helped motivate students in a fully online environment,” he said.

Apart from motivation, Dr Hew was also concerned that the online environment could dampen active learning because students do not have instructors or peers in the same room to help them keep on track and reflect on their lessons. This suggested that self-regulated learning was especially important for student engagement online.

“Some students have told us, post-course, that they just come to class with no personal goals in mind. Of course, the course objectives are set by the instructor, but students should also consider such things as how much effort they want to put in, what they plan to learn, and what they want to get out of the course. If I, as the instructor, set five objectives, some students may only want to focus on the two or three that they feel are more meaningful to them,” he said.

To spark such reflection, Dr Hew and two PhD students have developed a simple chatbot that acts as an automatic recommender system. When a student enters the class on Moodle, the chatbot asks them what their goals are for the class. After the student inputs a response, the chatbot will recommend certain actions they can take.

Although the chatbot is still at a preliminary stage, it was tested on the January 2021 class. Post-course interviews with 18 students revealed that it had positive effects. “We were pleasantly surprised to see that students feel the chatbot is helpful. They find that the very fact they are being prompted to set their own goals makes them aware of these things,” he said. The chatbot is being refined for further testing on students in the 2021-22 academic year, with the target of submitting a project report in 2023.

While Dr Hew’s experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic have been the main driver of his current research, his work on MOOCs gave him a foundation for moving forward – including understanding the importance of requiring both teachers and students to turn on their cameras, the need for problem-oriented and active learning rather than having the teacher talk to the camera all the time, and the need for instructor availability such as regular online office hours.

“Instructors also need to buy into online teaching methods,” he said. Dr Hew has invited colleagues to try out his activities based on gamification. “These things are based on theory. If you want to do them well and you pay attention to the details, they should work. The response so far has been positive,” he added.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A Boost for Non-Chinese Speaking Preschoolers

Ethnic minority families in Hong Kong, especially those of South Asian origin, live disproportionately in poverty. Whereas about 15 percent of the general population is classified as living in poverty, the rate is about one-third for ethnic minority families with young children. A key factor is their lack of access to better-paying jobs due to inadequate Chinese-language abilities. That reality is the motivation behind a project that targets the youngest non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in order to give them a better start in life.

The “Start from the Beginning – Chinese Supporting Scheme for Non-Chinese Speaking Students in Kindergarten” project builds on several years of work by Dr Loh Ka Yee, Elizabeth, Assistant Dean (Knowledge Exchange) and her collaborator Dr To-Chan Sing Pui, Tikky of The Education University of Hong Kong. The project was recently awarded HK\$26 million as the first recipient in Hong Kong of the Pay-for-Success fund (in which funders provide money for social programmes and are reimbursed by the government if targets are met or exceeded), as well as HK\$13 million from the Bank of China (Hong Kong) Centenary Charity Programme.

“When NCS children enter kindergarten, they are already three years behind their native-speaking counterparts,” Dr Loh said. “But teachers are not trained in teaching Chinese as a second language and they don’t have curriculum, teaching materials or pedagogies for this. There are also cultural differences that they need to be aware of.”

“If we don’t do something to support NCS children and their teachers, the gap will get bigger and bigger until, in some sense, the children will give up.”

Dr Loh and Dr To-Chan have been well-placed to take up that challenge – Dr Loh has a background in developing NCS curriculum and training materials for primary and secondary schools, while Dr To-Chan is an expert in early childhood education.

Joining forces to work with six seed schools in 2015, they have been developing curriculum and teaching materials that integrate Chinese as a second language into the thematic learning that characterises kindergarten learning. Games and play, gestures, culturally responsive storybooks, rhymes and songs are promoted to help children learn meaning through the whole language method. The rhymes and songs are devised by the team to match Cantonese tones with melodies so that children’s learning can be transferable to daily communication with native Chinese speakers. Over the past six years, the scheme has already been implemented in over 40 schools, with support from Oxfam Hong Kong and funding from the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund, Credit Suisse, Lee Hysan Foundation, Wu Jieh Yee Charitable Foundation Limited, Stan Group, The Chen Yet-Sen Family Foundation and Van Tse Zung Charity Foundation.

A Dynamic Enrichment Learning Mode has also been adopted to involve both small group and individual learning. For small group learning, the children get 30-minute sessions twice a week, while they get 30 minutes every two weeks for individual learning.

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Alongside that programme, teachers are provided with training, feedback, and exchange seminars so that they can learn from one another. Workshops are also organised to make the teachers aware of key issues for NCS learners – in particular, the difference in language systems (ideographic versus alphabetic), the lack of a Chinese language environment to support children at home, as well as the need to realise that these children start with little or no Chinese and require patience from teachers as they come to grips with a new language.

The team has also developed an assessment tool for assessing NCS students' Chinese language abilities. The combined scores of the assessment tool indicate that the Chinese proficiency for NCS students in the programme has significantly improved. Results from 2017 show K1 students went from a pre-test score of 14.35 to 30.18 after one year in the NCS programme. K2 students went from 16.92 to 66.86, and K3 students went from 47.47 to 93.89. "This would not have happened without the continuous support from our funders and our team's collective effort", suggested Dr Loh.

Most importantly, the gap between NCS and native Chinese-speaking students was narrowed. At K1, the difference was halved, from 1.69 before intervention to 0.83 after. At K2, it fell 66 percent from 0.86 to 0.29. And at K3, it fell 41 percent from 1.56 to 0.92.

"NCS students not only need good Chinese language proficiency, they need to perform as well as their Chinese counterparts," Dr Loh said. "The government wants them to study in mainstream Chinese schools, so they need to be able to cope with Chinese as a language of instruction – the bar is much higher than just learning the Chinese language itself."

Teachers on the ground have also provided anecdotal stories of success. Primary school teachers told the team that the NCS children who went through the kindergarten programme were competent in Chinese language and that they now saw the potential of these students given the right pedagogy and support. A school using Chinese as the medium of instruction even reported that a young graduate of the programme came first in Chinese in his class. Parents also reported that their children are more willing to use Chinese to communicate with their neighbours after attending the enrichment classes.

Dr To-Chan said that the new phase of the project, which will reach nearly 100 schools by 2023, will place a lot of emphasis on a train-the-trainer approach and developing and publishing teaching materials and guides. "By the time we finish, we are confident that our seed and network teachers will be able to further disseminate this method and curriculum to other schools with NCS children." Currently, about 500 kindergartens admit NCS students in Hong Kong.

Dr Loh added that they would also lobby the government for professional recognition of Chinese as a second language teachers, much as there is for English as a second language teachers. "Teaching NCS students is much more difficult than teaching native speakers. Their expertise and experience should be recognised, otherwise we can't retain these teachers," she explained.

DONATION

Supporting Fair Play

Concern for children's learning and welfare runs deep with Dr Koong May Kay, Maggie, Chief Principal of Causeway Bay Victoria Kindergarten and Victoria (China) Education Group and Co-founder and Head of Academy at Victoria Shanghai Academy. Her mother founded the forerunner to these organisations and would take her daughter along to do voluntary work in the community. Upon reaching adulthood, Dr Koong took that inspiring start to life and ran with it.

She completed her undergraduate studies in the USA and returned to Hong Kong in the early 1990s to join the family business. Then, in testament to her commitment and energy, she completed a Master of Education degree at HKU over four years during which she also got married, gave birth to two children and opened two schools. She remembers submitting assignments while on honeymoon and just before going into labour.

"It was a very productive time!" she said, yet she has barely let up since. Over the past two decades, Dr Koong has earned a distance Doctor of Education degree from Durham University and served at a high level in multiple organisations such as United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Shanghai Committee and the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education, where she was World President from 2013-16.

She has also continued to grow her organisation to establish more than 20 kindergartens, a primary school and a secondary school in Hong Kong and Mainland China. Moreover, she has served on various government committees in Hong Kong, and developed early childhood education materials that children can use at home with their parents to develop their skills. These materials target parents as much as children.

"Parents need training, too. We try to tell them that we teachers are not teaching children. We are facilitating their growth by providing learning support and guidance, and we want to give parents something they can do to interact with their kids in a meaningful way," she said.

Recently, Dr Koong has devoted much of her energy to helping children in adversity learn through play and develop resilience. She worked with UNESCO in Africa and UNICEF in Mainland China to produce toolkits for teachers, caregivers and other stakeholders. And this year, represented by Dr Koong, the Victoria Charitable Education Foundation Limited and Causeway Bay Kaifong Welfare Association donated HK\$500,000 to support the work of the Faculty's Consortium for Research in Early Childhood Development and Education (CORE) for children from underprivileged families in Hong Kong.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that resilience is an issue in Hong Kong, too. I have previously worked with Professor Nirmala Rao, Director of CORE, so I know the project is in good hands. It is a small project but has potential to scale up to be a model for others," she said.

Ultimately, Dr Koong would like children everywhere to benefit from the kind of quality education that she has been practicing and advocating for more than three decades. "Equity is a major issue. Every child should have the right to receive quality early childhood education, where they can have meaningful interaction in a conducive environment. If there is no equity, there is no quality," she said.

Power to Librarians

Libraries have been dusting off their association with shelves of books and hushed spaces to embrace new technology, new ideas about learning and a deeper understanding of their role in research. At HKU, the new Director of Library Service/Fung Ping Shan Librarian, Faculty alumna Dr Woo Mei Wa, Esther, has played a central role in that transition.

Dr Woo was closely involved in the modernisation and expansion of library facilities over the past decade, which has included offering a wide variety of open and private spaces and seating types for individual and group learners. In her new role, she will be focusing on outreach across the University and into the community to advance open access to knowledge, support research and collaborate with other units on campus.

“Libraries have many roles to fulfil these days, and we need to explore the needs of our clientele and make the best use of our resources,” Dr Woo said. “We are working hard – people don’t often realise how busy librarians are!”

It is a role for which she is well-prepared. Apart from more than 25 years working at HKU Libraries and a Master’s degree in library science from McGill University, she completed a Doctor of Education degree with the Faculty in 2019, for which she drew on her experiences to examine more closely the impact and learning outcomes associated with different learning spaces. The experience also prepared her for the changing role of academic librarians.

“I chose to do a doctorate because I realised that I needed to polish my research skills. Over the past 10 to 15 years, libraries have gone from providing traditional services like circulation and user services to developing strong teams to support research, especially research data management and analysis. No matter the benefits to my career, I really appreciate the research skills I learnt. I have become more competent in problem-solving and more objective,” she said.

As she settles into her new position, she will oversee ongoing renovation of the Main Library and promote access to the Special Collections and Archives for teaching and other activities while preparing for the 90th anniversary of Fung Ping Shan Library and the 110th anniversary of the University Libraries in 2022. She is also closely involved in the new University Grants Committee-funded GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) Lab, which brings together collections and data from across the University to support virtual teaching and learning and digital scholarship.

Dr Woo also supports open access to HKU’s digital copyright-free materials. “Open access is a very important movement for human development. Libraries have a lot of good quality information and resources, and we can help that movement by sharing our copyright-free resources.”

Mentor Models His Own Advice

Kwan Cheuk Kuen, Anderson is a mathematics teacher, but limiting him to that one label would be unfair. His undergraduate degree was in manufacturing engineering and he has two Master's degrees: one in computing and the other in education with a focus on educational guidance from the Faculty of Education at HKU in 2004. He has also advised the Education Bureau on technology education, quality assurance and online mathematics learning materials, lectures part-time in our Faculty and has published two papers on gifted education in maths. Moreover, he has received a conditional offer to do a PhD at the Institute of Education, University College London.

Added to that full plate, he has also been a mentor in the Faculty since 2017.

“I have many interests and I like to do things in a meaningful way. If I only taught maths, I think that would be boring,” he said.

Mr Kwan attempts to pass on his knowledge and enthusiasm to the student teachers of the new generation via the Faculty mentorship programme, because he really hopes his mentees could understand more about the current circumstances and ecology of the education field in the territory beyond their own classrooms.

Mr Kwan conveys that excitement about learning to his mentees. To date, he has mentored eight students to help them better understand the education field and themselves and equip them to face coming challenges. He has provided them with updates on new developments in the local and international educational fields and advised them on how to study properly, prepare for teaching practica, write resumes and cover letters and practice for job interviews.

“I've never had a mentee whose specialty is mathematics education but that doesn't matter. We seldom talk about subject matter, and it is more about helping them look into the next stage of their personal and professional development,” he said.

“I answered a lot of questions from my mentee on WhatsApp one night guiding her on how to plan her further study, say from MPhil to PhD, as well as how to actualise her planning. She is very smart and ambitious with excellent academic results. She has also obtained some prestigious awards and conducted presentations at different academic conferences or symposia. Yet, I still felt the need to give her positive recognition and reassurance to confirm that her further study planning would come true. At that moment, I felt as if I were her supervisor instead of her mentor,” he added.

Mr Kwan has been fortunate in achieving goals in both arenas. He has taught at St Peter's Secondary School for about 30 years and is also a part-time lecturer in the Faculty's Centre for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education. He was seconded to the Education Bureau for two years from 2009-11 to work on mathematics education and sit on some of its committees. The combination of work experience and community service motivated his application for a PhD, which he will pursue when his daughter finishes secondary school. True to his profession as an educator, his aim in further education is not so much obtaining the degree as the learning process he will undergo.

“I tell my mentees to widen their horizons. It is not enough to study at university and teach. Instead, they will find life to be more meaningful if they broaden their networks and learn more about education around the world,” he said.

STUDENTS

The Virtues of Going Virtual

The COVID-19 pandemic may have restricted international travel, but it has not put a halt to cross-cultural learning opportunities. Students from the Faculty and Singapore's National Institute of Education (NIE) made creative use of online engagement to organise a virtual exchange this year that left them wanting more.

The NIE x HKU Virtual Student Collaboration for student teachers was held every Sunday evening from February 28 to March 28, 2021 to explore education in each city and carry out shared activities. Eight students from each institution participated and were paired through a buddy system.

“This was an unmatched opportunity to make new friends and learn more about the approaches and pedagogies adopted in Singapore's schools and about Singaporean culture,” said Cao Yexin, Rachel, one of the organisers. “I also learnt how to be a more capable team leader and use feedback to improve.”

The programme consisted of an orientation event; three Webinars covering education systems, educational reform, and curriculum sharing; and a closing session. The participants also shared views on two education-themed films – Little Big Master from Hong Kong and I Not Stupid Too from Singapore. Staff and other students from HKU were invited to join the Webinars too.

“I liked that students designed the programme from scratch,” said Ng Tsz Ying, Crystal, who was closely involved in the planning process. “It also helped me understand our local education system better – for example, I looked more closely at the curriculum goal of teaching English.”

Wong Ming Chun, Ben learnt that Singapore teaches biology differently by focusing on commonalities across different systems, rather than treating each system separately. “This approach is better for understanding what is meant by a system and it may be useful for me when I teach biology in future,” he said.

Hui Lok Hang, Hedy was impressed that Singapore encouraged students to pursue different pathways, not just university. “Many people in Hong Kong perceive that getting into university is the only way to success. I believe we should encourage students to pursue diverse career options based on their interest and ability,” she said.

All students were impressed by the ease of making friends online. They continued interacting beyond the Sunday sessions by, for example, meeting their Singapore buddies for lunch through ZOOM and staying in touch through WhatsApp.

Going forward, they all hoped to see the programme expanded with more sessions, more interaction time, larger buddy groups and more universities. “It was beyond my expectations,” added Hedy.

PROGRAMMES

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Weibo: <https://weibo.com/hkueducation>

Our Postgraduate Programmes

Being an educator is both challenging and rewarding. If you wish to enhance your career prospects and strengthen your competence in the field of education, we invite you to study with us in the postgraduate programmes offered by our Faculty in 2022-23:

- Doctor of Philosophy [PhD]
- Doctor of Education [EdD]
- Master of Philosophy [MPhil]
- Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages [MA(TESOL)]
- Master of Education [MEd]
- Master of Science in Audiology [MSc(Audiology)]
- Master of Science in Information Technology in Education [MSc(ITE)]
- Master of Science in Library and Information Management [MSc(LIM)]
- Postgraduate Diploma in Education [PGDE]
- Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language) [PGDE(TCSL)] (self-funded)

More Information: <https://web.edu.hku.hk/programmes>

How to Apply: <https://www.admissions.hku.hk/tpg>

Education Giant Professor Lee Shulman Receives Honorary Degree from HKU

Professor Lee Shulman, the world-renowned educational psychologist, educator and reformer, and the Charles E. Ducommun Emeritus Professor of Education at Stanford University, USA, was conferred the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences honoris causa by HKU in the 204th Congregation held in April 2021. He is the only honouree this year to receive the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences.

Professor Shulman has made a significant impact in education and teacher education by conceptualising a specialised form of teachers' knowledge known as "Pedagogical Content Knowledge". He has also held important positions such as President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, President of the American Educational Research Association, and Vice President and President of the National Academy of Education.

Professor Shulman is a familiar and highly respected figure in the higher education sector in Hong Kong. Our Faculty is honoured to have welcomed Professor Shulman as a keynote speaker in the "Reimagining Teacher Education Symposium" in 2018, where he gave a distinguished lecture entitled "Igniting the Imagination of Teacher Education: Learning from Our Own Best Ideas and Practices... and from Our Neighbours", sponsored by the Tin Ka Ping Foundation. He also contributed expert advice to the Faculty on our teacher education programmes.

Professor Shulman stressed that teachers' work often involved helping students to hold on to their ideals and their visions of a better world even as teachers teach them to make their ways in the world in which they live.

Warmest congratulations to Professor Shulman!

PEOPLE

Achievements

Chairperson of Special Interest Group (SIG) for Cognition and Assessment of the American Educational Research Association (AERA)

Professor Jimmy de la Torre

Chairman of the Resolution Committee, Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration

Dr Vincent Wong

Research Grants Council Research Fellow

Dr Shelley Tong

Faculty Knowledge Exchange Award 2021

Professor Nancy Law and her team

Faculty Outstanding Researcher Award 2020-2021

Dr Shelley Tong

Faculty Outstanding Young Researcher Award

2020-2021

Dr Chen Gaowei

Faculty Outstanding Research Student Supervisor Award 2020-2021

Dr Li Yongyan

Faculty Early Career Research Output Award 2021

Dr Feng Shihui

Faculty Early Career Teaching Award

Dr Peter Cobb

Ms Promail Leung

CEDARS 24th Recognition Ceremony - Other Awards and Learning Experience (Serving as the Co-founder & Director of Artpeace)

Miss Alya Prasad, Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Science student

CEDARS Reward Scheme for Students 2020 - Silver Award

Miss Jhalak Rakesh Sheth, Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Social Sciences student

PEOPLE

Welcome

Dr Mehdi Bakhtiar, Associate Professor

Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences

Dr Mehdi Bakhtiar joined the Faculty as an Assistant Professor in July 2021. He obtained his PhD in Cognitive Neuroscience of Language from HKU. His research interest is related to the underlying aspects of speech deficits in people with fluency disorders and neurogenic communication disorders. His current research has a clinical orientation as well, including the development of assessment tools and application of non-invasive brain stimulation for treatment of people with speech and language disorders.

Dr William Choi, Assistant Professor

Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences

Dr William Choi joined the Faculty as an Assistant Professor in July 2021. He graduated from HKU with a Bachelor of Science in Speech and Hearing Sciences degree in 2014 and a PhD degree in Speech and Hearing Sciences in 2018. He engages in psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic research, with particular foci on Cantonese tone perception, English stress perception and music perception. He is also an Associate Editor and Editorial Board member of three international peer-reviewed journals.

Dr Deng Qinli, Post-doctoral Fellow

Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences

Dr Deng Qinli joined the Faculty as a Post-doctoral Fellow in June 2021. She received her PhD degree from HKU. Her research interests include the neural mechanisms of sign language processing, and metalinguistic correlations of reading comprehension development in children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Her research works have been published in several peer-reviewed journals, including the Journal of Learning Disabilities, the Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, and Neuropsychologia.

Dr Kong Pak Hin, Anthony Associate Professor

Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences

Dr Anthony Kong joined the Faculty as an Associate Professor in September 2021. He has worked as an associate professor and research scientist in communication sciences and disorders in the USA for the past 15 years. Dr Kong's research interests include discourse analysis, aphasia and related neurogenic communication disorders, the development of clinical batteries of language and cognitive skills, multilingualism, and gesture production. He is currently Section Editor (Linguistics Section) of PLOS ONE and Editorial Board Member of Perspectives of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Special Interest Groups.

PEOPLE

Professor Tan Hwee Phio, Charlene Professor Academic Unit of Social Contexts and Policies of Education

Professor Charlene Tan joined the Faculty as a Professor in September 2021. Born and raised in Singapore, she has more than 20 years' experience as a school teacher and teacher educator, including 17 years at Nanyang Technological University where she taught educational leaders from Singapore and Mainland China. As a mindful education instructor who completed her training through the University of Oxford Mindfulness Centre and Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP), Professor Tan is committed to promoting the holistic well-being of all students and educators.

Ms Lee Kiu, Vivien, Assistant Lecturer Academic Unit of Teacher Education and Learning Leadership

Ms Vivien Lee joined the Faculty as an Assistant Lecturer in August 2021. She is interested in bridging the gap between theoretical design and the practical execution of experiential learning (EL) in local schools. She has enjoyed her EL work as a frontline English Language teacher in Hong Kong and would like to further expand her passion for EL as well as language arts in the higher education context. As a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education alumna from HKU, she hopes to share her experience and knowledge with future teachers-to-be.

Dr Jiang Lianjiang, George, Assistant Professor Academic Unit of Teacher Education and Learning Leadership

Dr George Jiang joined the Faculty as an Assistant Professor in August 2021. His research examines bi/multilinguals' digital literacies across different contexts, with special attention to their digital multimodal composing process and the pertaining implications for L2 writing, feedback and teaching. His main research goals include understanding how digitally-mediated multimodal composing and writing fosters multiple literacies, content learning, and civic actions of youths, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Dr Jiang obtained his PhD degree from HKU and he has published in a number of international journals, including TESOL Quarterly, the Journal of Second Language Writing, and Computer Assisted Language Learning.

Dr Ma Yuet Kwan, Gloria, Post-doctoral Fellow Academic Unit of Teacher Education and Learning Leadership

Dr Gloria Ma was awarded the RGC Postdoctoral Fellowship in 2020 and joined the Faculty as a Post-doctoral Fellow in December 2020. Her research interests include ecological approaches to ableism, environmental accessibility, and the International Symbol of Accessibility. She obtained her PhD in Psychology from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2018. She co-founded the Wheel Power Charity Limited in 2014 to promote social inclusion through experiential programmes. She is a power wheelchair user living with congenital muscular dystrophy.

PEOPLE

Dr Seyyed-Abdolhamid Mirhosseini, Associate Professor Academic Unit of Teacher Education and Learning Leadership

Dr Seyyed-Abdolhamid (Hamid) Mirhosseini joined the Faculty as an Associate Professor in August 2021. His teaching/research areas include the sociopolitics of English language education, qualitative research methodology, and critical studies of discourse in society. His writing has appeared in such journals as *Applied Linguistics*, *Language, Identity and Education*, *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* and *TESOL Quarterly*. He has co-edited several volumes published by Springer, Routledge, and Bloomsbury, and has recently written “Doing Qualitative Research in Language Education” (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

Promotion and Tenure

Tenured and promoted to Associate Professor
Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences
Dr Chen Gaowei

Academic Unit of Teacher Education and Learning Leadership
Dr Jim Chan
Dr Kennedy Chan

New Appointment

Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences
Dr Elizabeth Barrett, Senior Lecturer
Dr Stephanie Chan, Lecturer

Academic Unit of Social Contexts and Policies of Education
Dr Frank Reichert, Assistant Professor

Academic Unit of Teacher Education and Learning Leadership
Ms Rita Ng, Lecturer
Ms Tanya Kempston, Senior Lecturer

PEOPLE

Goodbye

We would like to express our gratitude and send our best wishes to the following staff members who have left the Faculty. We wish them the best of luck for the future.

Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences

Ms Natalie Ip, Assistant Lecturer

Dr Mohammad Momenian, Post-doctoral Fellow

Professor Stephanie Stokes, Professor

Dr Sun Rui, Post-doctoral Fellow

Ms Emily Wan, Assistant Lecturer

Professor Brendan Stuart Weekes, Chair Professor

Dr Pui-san Wong, Associate Professor

Academic Unit of Social Contexts and Policies of Education

Dr Gary Harfitt, Associate Professor

Professor Law Wing Wah, Professor

Dr Lisa Yiu, Assistant Professor

Academic Unit of Teacher Education and Learning Leadership

Dr Margaret Lo, Assistant Professor

Dr Aaron Siu, Senior Lecturer

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