

Clove room
4.25-4.40pm

Engaging students as partners in curriculum development

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Within traditional tertiary education, the perceived authority often lies in instructors and academic staff to decide what goes into the curriculum, and what students should learn to gain expertise in a certain field. At the Centre for Future-ready Graduates (CFG), we sought to transform the educational imbalance to include students' voices and ideas during the creation of our module's curriculum. In this interactive PechaKucha session, CFG will present the benefits of collaborating with students at the curriculum planning stage to transform the learning process for them. As "future-ready" educators, we aim to design teaching activities that better engage students and provide opportunities for them to develop creative ideas, so as to build a sustainable learning community. In the module CFG1020 "Roots & Wings 2.0 (Personal and Interpersonal Effectiveness)", we facilitated student-centric experiential learning activities, a purposeful capstone project, and peer mentoring to stimulate students' interests and understanding of the content.

While we advocate for students to maximise their human potential to lead a meaningful life through experimentation and self-discovery, we also invited them to share their reservoir of ideas so that they can be the part of the change that they would like to see. The students on CFG1020 were tasked to reflect on how the current structures and systems at the National University of Singapore (NUS) could better support their university journey and allow them to graduate as the best version of themselves. In the capstone project, they worked in groups to explore the methods which the NUS ecosystem could help students cultivate social-emotional skills; and the strategies to make the Roots & Wings learning journey sustainable for their juniors. Some of these students surveyed their peers and identified that most of the students were concerned with three key aspects: academics, future employability, and school recreational activities. They suggested that most students may not place personal development as a priority due to the lack of opportunities for them to practice such skills, and undergraduates often have to juggle many responsibilities, including a stressful academic life.

We aim to transform the way people think and do things through contributing to education, research, and service at the University. However, the intensive technical curriculum that is currently prepared for most students may be insufficient in equipping them to tackle future challenges in their respective workplaces. As such, CFG1020 students proposed innovative solutions to revolutionise education beyond its traditional mold, by inculcating the importance of soft skills training in their peers' everyday lives. We received notable imaginative and creative suggestions through capstone projects submitted over four semesters. One of the more outstanding propositions included the proposal of a board game to promote values like empathy, gratitude, and happiness among individuals. The students were inspired by popular communal board games such as 'Avalon' and 'Resistance' which are mainly geared towards leisure players. CFG1020 students designed a standalone innovative gameplay from scratch that integrated key Roots & Wings concepts from the module. It was heartening and astonishing to see the level of detail and effort that was put into crafting the physical board game, coupled with its accompanying rules and mechanisms. There is great potential in the use of capstone projects, as such creative solutions could be used to make learning more engaging and fun for all students at different levels of development, and at the same time cater to varying learning styles.

This presentation will showcase some of the students' creations and explain the process that the instructors took to instill students' interest in the co-creation of curriculum content. This presentation aims to have participants experience a shift in perspective, from viewing students as "consumers" of education, to viewing students as "partners" in curricular conceptualisation instead.

Keywords

Engagement, co-creation, curriculum development, pedagogy