

**Boosting Students Motivation and Community Understanding Through  
Students-Design Board Games**

Submitted by

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## Declaration

Huang Qiwen declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of Li, Yuet Man Benjamin, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

Signed

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Community is a word that is not new to us all, and we all spend almost every day in our neighborhoods, but how much do people know about their neighborhoods, or have they ever thought about taking the initiative to get to know their neighborhoods? Before this capstone project began, my team and I thought about this question and realized that the lack of community awareness and understanding of the community has been particularly acute among young people in recent years. Therefore, we collaborated with 11 Form 5 students from SKH St. Mary's Church Mok Hing Yiu College in Sham Shui Po to create a board game about Sham Shui Po in 10 lessons and organized a board game experience day for university students, secondary students and primary students. This capstone project was the largest project I have ever participated in, and I gained a lot of experience by applying what I learned in the classroom, as well as a deeper understanding of my personal strengths and weaknesses, and my future direction.

The program implements a Place-Based Education approach. This pedagogical approach emphasizes the connection between students and their physical location by utilizing context-specific resources to enhance students' practical skills and develop a sense of community identity (Yemini et al., 2023). We chose Sham Shui Po, the students' community, as the setting for the project, and we conducted a series of data

collection, fieldwork, and game design. The first goal is to enhance students' understanding of their own community; the second goal is to develop students' skills through the process of board game design, including teamwork, communication skills, and practical skills such as video shooting and editing; and the third goal is to let more people from different communities know more about Sham Shui Po through this board game. The third objective was to let more people from different communities know more about Sham Shui Po through this board game. We have achieved these three objectives to a large extent.

To assess the achievement of these objectives more comprehensively, we used observation and questionnaires after each lesson. For the first objective of enhancing students' knowledge and understanding, initially students told us that even though they lived in Sham Shui Po, they were not very familiar with it and were not interested in learning more about it. However, during the fieldwork after collecting information, we observed that when students entered the community, because they had an old impression of the community, they were curious and actively kept asking questions about many things in the community, which had begun to change now. At the end of the project, the secondary students were able to play the role of teachers to lead the

primary students to play the board games designed by us and introduce the culture and history of Sham Shui Po to them with confidence. In addition, in our after-school questionnaire survey, 11 students indicated that their knowledge of Sham Shui Po had increased in various aspects. The second objective was to develop students' skills in various aspects. Throughout the production process, we divided the students into three groups using the cultural, historical and social aspects of Sham Shui Po. They have been working in groups to design the game, and we observed that they would communicate with their group members, negotiate and take the initiative to express their inner thoughts, and in this process, the students' communication and expression skills have been enhanced. In addition, we designed some video shooting and editing courses for students to prepare for the board game's promotional video, students produced very good video effects, put the knowledge they learned into practice, and at the same time, 90% of the students expressed in the questionnaire that after they completed these video production courses, they had a higher confidence in mastering the video production techniques. The third objective was to let more people from different communities know about Sham Shui Po. Our board game experience day was held in a secondary school in Tin Shui Wai. There were five elementary school students who would experience our board game about Sham Shui Po. These primary school students came from different communities, and they had the opportunity to get in touch

with the social and cultural history of Sham Shui Po through this game. After the activity, students expressed that they had some initial understanding of Sham Shui Po, a community they did not know, and even wanted to buy this board game to play with more friends. In the long run, this board game can be passed down so that more people can understand the Sham Shui Po community through the game.

In fact, young people's lack of understanding of their own community is not only found in the Sham Shui Po community but is also very common throughout Hong Kong. Sociological imagination is a concept that I learned in class, which reminds me that the personal problems I often face are actually social problems, and that what needs to be solved is not the individual but the social phenomenon (Mills & Brandt, 2021). Brandt, 2021). Originally, I thought that these young people did not understand the community because of their personal interests and character, but when I look at this issue from a macro perspective, I think there are three social reasons why students do not understand the Sham Shui Po community and do not take the initiative to understand it, namely, the low livability of Sham Shui Po, the education system in schools, and changes in the urbanization of modern life.

Sham Shui Po is an older and lower-income district. People's impression of Sham Shui Po is that the streets are unhygienic and messy, the buildings are old, there are many sub-divided units and there are few employment opportunities. In the course of contacting the students, these popular impressions were confirmed. They said that whenever they passed by Pei Ho Street, they would smell the unpleasant odor and the street was piled up with cardboards or various kinds of garbage. Many of their classmates live in overcrowded sub-divided units. The low livability of the community and their negative impression of the community have reduced their interest in understanding and exploring the community, and they only use Sham Shui Po as a place to live. In addition, the current education system in Hong Kong tends to pursue academic and knowledge achievement only, ignoring the connection between students and their community or living environment. During these ten lessons, I could often hear the students talking about staying after school today for tutorials or going to the tutorial center for tutorials after school, and so on. After talking with them, I realized that almost every day they live in a 2:00 or 3:00 life, they come home from school to do their homework or go to the tutorial center and then go home again. This is not their personal choice, but rather the education system and social pressure that force them to do so. The social culture is filled with the idea that people with higher education have more opportunities for upward mobility, and the lack of social education programs in the

community at school, resulting in students not having the opportunity to learn about their own community, or even being out of touch with the environment in which they live. This is also one of the reasons why students were amazed by the changes in Sham Shui Po when we took them on a field trip. Besides, the change of urbanized modern life has made transportation in the city more convenient, and it is also easier for students to get information from the media. The dissemination and promotion of digital media tend to recommend the more central and popular districts in the city. When students receive such information and the transportation is convenient, they tend to leave Sham Shui Po and go to other districts during their leisure time. When students collect information about Sham Shui Po, they realized that Sham Shui Po also has some special stores and special places, not only the West Kowloon Center that they are familiar with. Often the information we passively acquire is unrelated to our own community. If we don't take the initiative to explore, we may become more and more unfamiliar with the community we live in.

I think this project is very effective for the development of the community and the students' participation as community members. The students started as community members who was not familiar with Sham Shui Po, and started their own journey to

understand the community by making a board game, conducting fieldwork, filming, and documenting in three directions: social, cultural, and historical. In the process, they not only listened to the stories told to them by shopkeepers and neighbors, but they also integrated themselves into the community and interacted with the community members.

The final board game results are from the students, they can not only feel their own contribution to the community, but also because of the board game as a vehicle to present their own eyes on the understanding of Sham Shui Po, and even to introduce their own community outside the community Sham Shui Po process to strengthen the sense of belonging to Sham Shui Po, and at the same time, personal identity to the community will also be enhanced.

For myself, this project was a process of self-discovery for me, even though it was a way for me to lead secondary school students to learn about their community and create a board game. Carefulness is supposed to be a positive word, but in the past, I have found it to be a weakness because it often takes a lot of time, but I have rediscovered this strength in this capstone project. We had to prepare lesson plans for the classroom and design the route for the field trip, etc. In the preparation of the lesson plans, we had only written down the process very simply, which led to some time management and

process problems in the first class. However, I followed my own ideas and wrote down each process carefully, and also thought of some back-up plans, which made the whole process much smoother. In addition, my communication skills have also improved. At the beginning, I had to lead 11 students like a teacher, which was a great challenge for me. From the beginning, I was not confident and spoke in a low voice, which caused the students not to listen very attentively, and then I had to lead the group to have some discussions in every lesson, so slowly I kept on making a lot of attempts to interact with the students, and I learned to express my ideas clearly and adjusted my way of expression according to their feedback, and established a good relationship with them. By the time I stood up in front of the class again in the eighth session, I felt that I was able to convey my message to them with confidence, and my communication skills had obviously improved. In addition, because I had to change my old mindset of being a passive student to a proactive one, I needed to take the initiative to understand the progress of the students and update the teachers at the secondary school instead of waiting to be assigned. This positive mindset fostered a sense of responsibility in me, and I believe that this change of mindset will enable me to be more comfortable in my future work adaptation.

In conclusion, the capstone program, in addition to achieving our three pre-determined goals, has helped me turn my classroom knowledge into practice. I have been able to look at the community from a sociological point of view, improve my critical thinking, and develop and improve many skills. Before this experience, I thought that I would not be suitable for working with people in the future because I am not good at communicating and interacting with people, but after this experience, my communication skills have improved, and I think I can try to work with people in the future. In the long run, I will apply what I have learned from this experience to my future work, maintain my strengths and continue to improve my weaknesses.

(2045 words)

## **References**

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