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# HKBU BEST PRACTICES CASE 3

## Engaging associate degree students in research enables them to stand out in academic performance

*Interview of Dr. Benjamin Ka Lung Cheng and Dr. Wai Sing Tsen by Prof. Kara Chan and Chak Hee Lo*

**Benjamin Cheng:** Back in 2015 I designed the first course-based research project, and it was considered a win-win-win situation. The course involved course-based research and it was called a “Broadcast laboratory.” We thought it would be a good idea to require students to conduct a study on current affairs in society and report the findings in a radio program.

CONSUMER SURVEY

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MEDIA AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

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BROADCAST LABORATORY

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FOCUS GROUP STUDY

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How is it a win-win-win scenario? First of all, the students did not have much experience doing a research project like this, so it gave them an opportunity to try it out. Second of all, we required the students to prepare a press release to pitch a media story to the media. It would bring some positive publicity for the School. Third of all, the project made us more research active. That year, the course had around 30 students. Most of them were in communication.

The ultimate deliverable of the research project was to create a radio program about social issues. The topic was about parents and how they arrange extracurricular events for their kids. The topic was rather “juicy” for the students. They were able to approach the topic easily—maybe because they themselves participated in a lot of extracurricular activities when they were young. Through this work, we were hoping new ideas would be generated to better assist the growth of kids.

The study contains both a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. But mostly it was quantitative. The students split up into groups. Each group was responsible for setting three to four questions. The questions were then aggregated into a questionnaire. Each student collected about five questionnaires and the total sample size was around 200. It was also a qualitative study because as a radio program we need more than numbers and percentages. There were segments where we broadcast the interviews of some parents. The children were interviewed as well to see, for example, whether they enjoyed participating in extracurricular activities on weekends and public holidays.

The entire process, including data collection and data analysis, reporting the findings, writing a lead paragraph of the press release, and producing the radio program, took around five to six weeks. There was no application to the research ethics committee for this project because student projects were not required to apply for ethical approval.

Students self-reported that they better understood how to conduct a research study after completing this project. The results were reported in the media. Students often used the news clipping when they applied for senior years of the undergraduate programs. Professors who interviewed them were also impressed by the work they had done because it was something concrete that the students had in their resume.

**Wai Sing Tsen:** I taught a course called “Media Audience Analysis.” There are around 25 to 40 students studying this course each year. I designed and implemented course-based research projects for four years from 2018 to 2021. Research topics for the projects included audience perceptions of key opinion leaders (KOLs) in the media communication context, the use of travel apps, and online purchase behaviors. I gave students a project brief in the fourth week of class. In the next three weeks after giving them the brief, the students will conduct focus group interviews to collect qualitative data. We gave them some examples of what focus groups are like. We talked to them about what the role of the facilitator is. During the pandemic, we switched to one-on-one in-depth interviews. They turn in a report based on the focus group study. Students were then asked to provide a few questions from their interview work to be considered for including in a final questionnaire. I put together a final questionnaire based on students’ input. Then they will distribute the questionnaire mostly to their classmates for data analysis and learn about SPSS, descriptive statistics, etc. After this process they wrote a reflection report about the limitations they faced during the aforementioned tasks.

One project resulted in a journal article. There was a press release for that one. We did some publicity for that, with photos and etc. Students reported that they were able to pick up the skills of conducting both qualitative as well as quantitative research. By comparing the press release they prepared and the published stories in the media, they could identify how the media reported research studies conducted by the academia.



Dr. Benjamin Ka Lun Cheng is Senior Lecturer of Communication, College of International Education (CIE), Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU). Dr. Cheng has substantial teaching experience in higher education and often experiment new ideas in his teaching. He provides leadership in teaching and learning at the School of Continuing Education, HKBU, by serving as the Chairperson of the Teaching and Learning Central Committee of the School. Dr. Cheng has a number of publications at peer-reviewed international journals such as Learning Communities Journal, Journalism, Journalism Studies as well as Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly.



Dr. Wai Sing Tsen is Lecturer and Associate Program Director of Division of Communication, College of International Education (CIE), Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU). Dr. Tsen has been teaching in higher education for over 10 years. He is the vice-chairperson of Teaching and Learning Quality Committee at the College of International Education (CIE), HKBU. Dr. Tsen works closely with the Academic Divisions and related administrative units to promote teaching and learning quality, and to review different teaching and learning initiatives in the College. Dr. Tsen's research interests include online celebrities and influencer marketing, youth and e-mental health, and youth and deviant identity.

## About the authors

This article was prepared by Professor Kara Chan and Mr. Chak Hee Lo based on an interview on November 29, 2021 of Dr. Benjamin Ka Lung Cheng and Dr. Wai Sing Tsen.

Sources of images:

<https://www.sassymamahk.com/school-kids-activities-classes/>

<https://medium.com/@mithunvaghella/sell-your-stuff-create-and-sell-your-own-products-ed1edbb8904>

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