

UOB-SMU

Asian Enterprise Institute



Preparing For Life: Kosh Consulting Group

The Kosh Consulting Group is a global management consulting firm and a leading advisor on human capital and corporate strategy. Taking a multidisciplinary, knowledge-based approach, it focuses on providing practical solutions to real-life challenges. With a network of consultants comprising qualified academe and tenured

practitioners, the team is well-placed to provide customised programmes which pay equal attention to process and content, thus achieving results which are effective and enduring.

The Group's competence lies in the areas of psychology, management and human resource development, which spans psychological assessment (psychometric testing, assessment centres, interviews); organisation development; performance appraisal; survey research; leadership development; executive coaching and professional development.

Keeping Up With The World

In the "Shadow Education: Private Supplementary Tutoring and Its Implications for Policy Makers in Asia" report¹, released in July 2012 by the Asian Development Bank and the Comparative Education Research Center at the University of Hong Kong, it was revealed that tutoring is becoming prevalent across Asian nations. It also mentioned that some 97% of all Singaporean students received some form of tutoring. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the practice has become even more widespread in Singapore, underlying the emphasis on keeping ahead of the competition.

As Mark Bray, director of the Comparative Education Research Center at the University of Hong Kong and one of the authors of the "Shadow Education" report told *The New York Times*², a major factor for the high incidence of tutoring is globalisation – "Families are no longer competing with their own neighbourhood; they're competing with the region and the world". This means that paper qualifications will no longer be a sure way to the top. Instead, the future executives are expected to be adept at coping with constantly-evolving external conditions, possess the right attitude and have relevant skills and knowhow that are portable and universal – because their competitors are everywhere.

Singapore is already doing its part to future-proof its next generation. In recent years, the education landscape has seen a distinct shift as the Ministry of Education (MOE) acknowledges that children learn differently, and should be learning about things beyond their textbooks. This has resulted in an approach which offers more flexibility and diversity so that children are given greater choice to meet their varied interests and ways of learning. A broad-based education which encompasses academic and non-academic subjects can better promote holistic development.

MOE's move aligns with the times. Today, schools have already implemented less rote-learning, more critical thinking; less drill-down and textbook-based lessons, more experiential discovery; less book knowledge, more life skills and socio-emotional training – collectively called 21st century skills. According

¹ "Shadow Education: Private Supplementary Tutoring and Its Implications for Policy Makers in Asia", Asian Development Bank and the Comparative Education Research Center at the University of Hong Kong, July 2012

² "Tutoring Spreads beyond Asia's Wealthy", Liz Gooch, *The New York Times*, 5 August 2012

UOB-SMU

Asian Enterprise Institute

to MOE's Desired Outcomes of Education³, a person schooled in the Singapore education system has "a good sense of self-awareness, a sound moral compass, and the necessary skills and knowledge to take on challenges of the future. He is responsible to his family, community and nation. He appreciates the beauty of the world around him, possesses a healthy mind and body, and has a zest for life".

Outside The Traditional Syllabus

MOE has been proactive in ensuring that the Singapore education system retains its leading edge. A recent study by student-consultants of a UOB-SMU Asia Enterprise Institute (AEI) project reveals that 90% of the schools they surveyed already provide enrichment classes or workshops covering the broad areas of self-awareness and personal development; study and thinking skills, and social skills. These skills are consciously and subconsciously honed as the students go about their everyday activities. Other school programmes like camps, CCAs, inter-class competitions and school events also provide ample opportunity for students to put into constant practice the 21st century skills they have picked up.

With the wide-ranging topics in this non-academic sphere, coupled with teachers' heavy workloads, some schools have begun reaching out to external parties to conduct such skills training. Working with the right collaborators brings many advantages, among them specialist knowledge, experienced trainers, and tried-and-tested materials which are more likely to lead to the desired outcomes.

Parents, too, acknowledge that life skills are important. In the same UOB-SMU AEI study, 80% of parents believe life skills, such as time management and resilience, are relevant today as they can help their children perform better in school; these skills also lay a strong foundation of discipline, values and beliefs so that the children can grow up to be useful citizens of tomorrow. About 87% of parents are of the view that life skills can be taught and by inference, they are supportive of such training for their children.

"A Pleasant Surprise"

When Kosh Consulting Group participated in the SME Consulting Programme, the flagship programme of UOB-SMU AEI, "we were modest in our expectations," shared Koh Shin, Founder and Chief Executive Officer. He was just looking for some feedback on the general perception of life skills programmes for students. Instead, the report he received was "professional, specific and insightful" and "far exceeded our initial expectations". Calling it "a pleasant surprise", Mr Koh said that his team is already "actively using the findings" to guide them in their strategic planning.

As for the team of three student-consultants who were tasked to conduct a market feasibility study for a new programme planned by Kosh Consulting Group, "our objectives were met" was their unified response. Tapping on what they had learnt in the classroom, they successfully applied the principles of analysis to this real-life case study and delivered on the requirements of the project. Along the way, they gained domain knowledge as well as valuable hands-on experience of how a market study is conducted and assessed.

The student-consultants credited Project Advisor Regina Chow as having played "a major role" in their project. As a past project advisor and an industry veteran, Ms Chow is uniquely qualified to guide the team on what needed to be done at the critical checkpoints.

"It was important for the students to understand the SME's project scope and objectives," said Ms Chow. The team must also ensure that the proposed recommendations "address the findings and challenges derived from the market research", and are "relevant and appropriate". This was something the student-consultants did very well, according to Mr Koh. He had found the quantitative and qualitative methods used "appropriate" as they provided a "sound basis" for the final recommendations. "The team adapted

³ www.moe.gov.sg/education/desired-outcomes

UOB-SMU

Asian Enterprise Institute

well to the ground constraints, and took into account real-world limitations.” Mr Koh then pronounced himself “impressed with the level of knowledge, professionalism and ingenuity that the team demonstrated throughout the project”.

Project Advisor: **Ms Regina CHOW**
Student Consultants: **Cheryl YUEN**
Bachelor of Science (Economics)
Daphne LEE
Bachelor of Social Sciences
Sneha SULTANIA
Bachelor of Science (Economics)