

## **No internship, no problem: Hong Kong youth can use the time to learn new skills**

Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups think tank Youth IDEAS' education group recently conducted a survey on university internships. Unsurprisingly, with the economic downturn and the restrictions caused by Covid-19, there have been drastic cutbacks and changes in internship opportunities.

Some employers turned to a mixture of online and offline models to structure their internship programmes. According to the survey, 54.3 per cent of the 457 students who got an internship did their work remotely.

Meanwhile, 37.1 per cent of the 420 students who failed to land an internship explored new interests and skills. Their positive attitude showed that, while life is full of setbacks, we can confront each setback with ingenuity.

There are at least three lessons we can learn here. First, learning is always the most valuable investment anyone can make. The value of academic qualifications may follow trends. Still, no society can do without people who learn fast and well. Lifelong learning helps students adapt in the future world. Learning fosters a curious mind that may lead you to creative solutions.

Second, information technology and analytical skills are critical to thriving in the future. A lot of information is accessible to everyone in the digital era. Students need to know how to manage and make use of data to detect the relevant signals.

Third, soft skills such as problem-solving are desired by employers in the new normal. We should identify an issue before it becomes a threat. People tend to be complacent, and it is not easy to spot a problem before it arises.

In view of future challenges, schools can provide skills training for students and help them adapt to virtual internships. The training could cover practical skills such as digital expertise and soft skills such as creative thinking and problem-solving. This would equip students with skill sets to cope with the new normal.

The adverse health and economic conditions of Covid-19 are still with us. We are down but certainly not out. Every challenge and change implies opportunities to learn and re-skill.

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