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## **Developing the Indispensable and Measuring the Un-measurable – Holistic Competencies Through an Evidence-based Pedagogical Driven System**

### Abstract:

As the world moves towards knowledge-based economies, increased emphasis is being placed on graduates' acquisition of holistic competencies along their disciplinary knowledge. With employers expressing concerns over the job-readiness of university graduates, higher education is now taking the responsibility for providing students a variety of competencies, which encompass work-related generic skills, values and attitudes that are beyond discipline knowledge (Chan, 2012). These holistic competencies include competencies such as critical thinking, professionalism and communication, and values and attitudes such as respect for others and intercultural awareness. And of course, for medical students, competencies are vitally important as they embrace their medical knowledge alongside with patient care facing serious decisions every day.

The topic of holistic competencies has generated a lot of discussions among key stakeholders, including hospital authorities, academics, students and the public. While earlier discussions of holistic competencies mostly centred on whether higher education should be responsible for students' holistic competencies development, recent debates have shifted the focus to whether all academic courses should provide students with holistic competencies training (e.g. Treleaven and Voola 2008); the issues of implementation and assessment; and positive attitudes and values - type of competencies which may not be immediately related to career, but are becoming vital for the betterment of society.

The examination-oriented culture in Asia also encourages students to focus on academic achievements at the expense of these development (Leung, Leung, & Zuo, 2014). Students often perceive developing holistic competencies as 'time-consuming' given the already heavy workload from their disciplines. Without a proper structure for assessing holistic competencies, the impact may be negligible.

In this presentation, a framework for the development of holistic competencies based on the concept of "avoider" and "engager" on student approaches to develop (Chan and Yeung, in press) in oppose to the well-known deep and surface approaches on student approaches to learning (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Lizzio, Wilson, & Simons, 2002) will be discussed. We will also discuss how holistic competencies can be assessed (if it should be assessed at all) and how can students document these learning outcomes as part of their learning process through a pedagogical driven system.