

Daniel T.L. Shek* and Lu Yu

Character strengths and service leadership

DOI 10.1515/ijdh-2015-0451

Received April 15, 2014; accepted June 15, 2014; previously published online September 12, 2015

Abstract: Character strengths refer to the moral aspects of personality that have multiple dimensions. As a basic requirement of a service leader, character strengths provide the most inherent power for fulfilling different tasks and pursuing continuous development. In this paper, a lecture that aims to foster character strengths in undergraduate students is introduced. The theoretical foundation of the lecture on character strengths is first presented, including the concepts and theories related to character strengths, their relevance to service leadership and methods to promote the development of character strengths. The basic content and activities designed for this particular lecture are then outlined for the reader to have an overall view of the lecture. Finally, reflection on the role of the lecturer in the cultivation of character strengths in students and additional topics for consideration are highlighted.

Keywords: character strengths; Hong Kong; moral character; service leadership.

Introduction

Alongside the post-industrial and economic evolution associated with globalization, Hong Kong has identified itself as a service-dominant society. According to the most recent statistics by the Hong Kong Government, different

service industries contributed to 93.1% of the GDP in Hong Kong [1]. People who show competencies as service leaders therefore constitute the most important human resources to promote the prosperity of Hong Kong. Accordingly, service leadership education that aims at providing basic knowledge, promoting understanding, developing the necessary skills, building up the service leadership value system among students and meeting the urgent need of local universities for developing their graduates into qualified service leaders has become an important priority for educators in the higher education sector.

The founding of the Hong Kong Institute of Service Leadership and Management (HKI-SLAM) represents a strategic effort to promote service leadership education and practice in Hong Kong's educational institutions, businesses and individuals [2]. The HKI-SLAM first conceptualized service leadership as a service aimed at ethically satisfying the needs of self, others, groups, communities, systems and environments by consistently providing high quality personal service to everyone one comes into contact with, including one's self [3]. A systematic curriculum framework on service leadership education was also developed. Starting from 2012, with the financial support of the Victor and William Fung Foundation, the HKI-SLAM launched a project entitled "The Li & Fung Service Leadership Initiative (SLI)" to further strengthen Hong Kong university curriculum in the areas of leadership, service and service leadership by supporting eight University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions in Hong Kong to design, develop, implement and evaluate different service leadership education programs. Each of the UGC-funded institutions is funded with HK\$ 1 million per year for 3 consecutive years to design their own programs and activities based on the HKI-SLAM curriculum framework. The primary objective of the SLI is "to develop in university students a working knowledge, appreciation, and commitment to continuously develop their service leadership, thereby strengthening Hong Kong's competitive advantage and its position as a global leader in providing services" [4].

As one of the eight participating universities under the SLI project, a two-credit bearing subject entitled "Service Leadership" was developed in The Hong Kong Polytechnic University for undergraduate students under the old 3-year undergraduate curriculum. Based on the framework proposed by the HKI-SLAM, a total

*Corresponding author: Daniel T.L. Shek, PhD, FHKPS, BBS, SBS, JP, Associate Vice President (Undergraduate Programme), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Room HJ407, Core H, Hunghom, Hong Kong, P.R. China, E-mail: daniel.shek@polyu.edu.hk; Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, P.R. China; Center for Innovative Programs for Adolescents and Families, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, P.R. China; Kiang Wu Nursing College of Macau, Macau, P.R. China; Department of Social Work, East China Normal University, Shanghai, P.R. China; and Division of Adolescent Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Kentucky Children's Hospital, University of Kentucky College of Medicine, Lexington, KY, USA
Lu Yu: Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, P.R. China

of 14 lectures were designed for this subject that aim to enable students to (1) learn and integrate theories, research and concepts of service leadership, especially the HKI-SLAM (service leadership and management) conceptual framework; (2) be familiar with essential knowledge, skills, attitudes and values covered in the HKI-SLAM curriculum; (3) develop and reflect on their moral character, psychosocial competences and caring dispositions; and (4) cultivate an appreciation of the importance of service leadership to the development and wellness of oneself, other people and the whole society. In the academic years of 2012–2013 and 2013–2014, this subject was offered to two cohorts of students from different departments [5].

Specifically, three key components of service leadership including competencies, caring disposition, and moral characters are highlighted in this subject. Besides relevant situational task competencies which are commonly emphasized in different models of leadership, the HKI-SLAM model stresses the importance of caring disposition and character strengths in effective service leaders. The present paper introduces one lecture focusing on the promotion of character strengths as one of the key components of service leadership in students. Different teaching and learning methods including reflective learning, experiential learning, intellectual thinking, as well as collaborative learning are used in the lecture to help students further understand the lecture content and reflect on their own character strengths.

Content and design of the lecture

The current lecture attempts to familiarize the students with the notion of character strengths and help them nurture their character strengths. To become an effective service leader, students must understand the basic theories of character strengths and their relevance to service leadership. In this lecture, concepts of character strengths are first introduced from both a traditional Chinese approach and a Western positive psychology approach. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own character strengths. Finally, methods to promote one's own character strengths are discussed.

Intended learning outcomes

It is expected that after taking this lecture, students are able to understand the nature of character strengths and

the related dimensions, appreciate the positive influences of character strengths on one's life and recognize character strengths as an essential attribute of a service leader. In addition, students are expected to reflect on their character strengths and potentials through self-reflection and group discussion and make plans for the character strengths they wish to develop most.

Theoretical content of the lecture

There are various definitions of character strengths. Baumrind [6] defined character as individual qualities that lead one to will the good and pursue the good. It is a group of morally valued characteristics that are reflected in individuals' feelings, thoughts and actions [7]. Peterson and Seligman first proposed the concept of character strengths as a multidimensional structure in the framework of the Value in Action (VIA) Classification of Strengths [8, 9]. According to Peterson and Park [10], character strengths are defined as the "subset of personality traits on which we place moral values" [p. 51], which is "a well-developed family of positive traits" [11, p. 42]. Based on empirical research studies, Peterson and Seligman [9] further conceptualized character strengths as a six-dimensional model consisting of 24 universally valued character strengths that contribute to optimal development of individuals.

In this lecture, the six dimensions of character strengths are introduced to students. These include wisdom and knowledge (cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge), courage (emotional strengths that involve exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition), humanity (interpersonal strengths that entail befriending others), justice (civic strengths that underlie healthy community life), temperance (the strengths that protect one against excess) and transcendence (strengths that build connections to the larger universe and provide meaning). Each dimension and its related positive traits are shown in Table 1.

The role of character strengths has long been recognized in the leadership literature. Hence, the relationship between character strengths and leadership are covered in the second part of the lecture. In the model of personality, motivation and leadership [12], the direct and indirect influence of dispositional and situational factors on self-identity and leadership behaviors are emphasized. Based on this model, Sosik and Cameron [13] proposed a theory that focuses on the role of character strengths in leadership process under the VIA's classification. It was found that more character strengths

Table 1: Six-dimensional model of character strengths [9].

Dimension	Traits
Wisdom & Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creativity 2. Curiosity 3. Open-mindedness 4. Love of learning 5. Perspective
Courage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Honesty 2. Bravery 3. Persistence 4. Zest
Humanity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kindness 2. Love 3. Social intelligence
Justice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fairness 2. Leadership 3. Teamwork
Temperance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forgiveness 2. Modesty 3. Prudence 4. Self-regulation
Transcendence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appreciation of beauty & excellence 2. Gratitude 3. Hope 4. Humor 5. Religiousness

enable a leader to develop better to fit in with different ethical, cultural and socio-economic contexts and to display transformational and authentic leadership behavior. Performing transformational and authentic leadership over time would also enhance leaders' awareness of their character strengths [13].

In the transformational leadership theory [14], there are four key leadership behaviors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, which all emphasize that leaders must be moral agents. Specifically, idealized influence emphasizes leaders as charismatic role models in defining ethical standards and performance, while inspirational motivation articulates leaders as future-oriented and visionary in advocating excellence and self-sacrificing for the greater good. Intellectual stimulation highlights leaders' role to challenge assumptions and to integrate different viewpoints and individualized consideration refers to leaders' selfless service to followers by appreciating individual differences and providing mentoring [13].

There has been accumulating empirical evidence showing that character strengths could bring positive outcomes to people's individual and societal well-being.

Good character is positively associated with school success, leadership, altruism, the ability to delay gratification and kindness [15]. It is also robustly associated with life satisfaction and work satisfaction across different occupations [16]. When categorizing character strengths as relating to the "head", it is strongly related to academic success in formal education. Character strengths as relating to the "heart" are more related to general well-being in the non-formal education context [8, 16]. These results further validate that character strengths as a comprehensive construct is crucial to a psychologically fulfilling life.

The cultivation of character strengths is also covered in the lecture. In most school education and youth programs, skills and abilities are of primary focus that help students to achieve academic and career success. In contrast, the cultivation of character strengths has received less attention. However, character strengths do not only prevent individuals from developing undesirable outcomes, they are also important indicators of healthy and positive life-long development. Research has shown that apart from buffering the negative influence of stress and trauma, good character is predictive of reduced physical and psychological problems [17] and positive life outcomes such as school success [15].

Character strengths can be learned and acquired through practice. They are habits that could be developed through "choosing the good and consistently acting in accordance with it" [11, p. 46]. Parenting, schooling and socialization are all effective ways in cultivating character strengths. Cultivation of character strength is consistent with the spirit of strengths-based education, which maintains that everyone has the potential to capitalize on one's best qualities and lead to greater success rather than focusing on overcoming weakness or deficiencies [18]. It is about "discovering what they do best and developing and applying their strengths as they help students identify and apply their strengths in the learning process so that they can reach previously unattained levels of personal excellence" [18, p. 2].

According to Anderson [19], the sequence of strengths-based education involves the following steps. First, one's talents could be discovered through measurement of strengths. Second, individuals are encouraged to apply their strengths in areas where they have confidence or interest in achieving. Third, opportunities are provided for one to apply strengths in areas where one has struggled or had difficulty. Fourth, individuals are motivated to fully make use of their strengths as resources and scaffolding. Finally, students are helped to align these strengths, values and beliefs toward important life goals aiming at attaining a high level of personal excellence.

Major content and activities of the lecture

The overall structure and arrangement of the lecture are summarized in Table 2. Before the formal lecture starts, the teacher recaps the key message of the previous lecture on interpersonal competence. Meanwhile, students are asked to recall the meaning of the equation “ $E=MC^2$ ” they have learned in previous lectures. That is, effective service leadership equals the product of moral character (character strengths), competences and a caring disposition. This would lead students to the topic of this lecture, one element in the equation, “moral character” or “character strengths”.

To highlight the importance of character strengths, a warm-up activity, “Super Hero vs. Super Villain”, is conducted to stimulate students’ thinking on what differences good moral characters can make. A series of pictures of cartoon characters standing for either super heroes or super villains are shown to students and they are asked to identify which characters are heroes and which ones are villains. Then students are requested to reflect on the differences/commonalities between the super heroes and super villains. If students find the question difficult to answer, the teacher would further decompose the question into a few sub-questions, such as “Whether the super heroes are competent?”; “What about the super villains?”; “Why people like super heroes?”, and “Why people hate super villains?”, etc. When students come up with answers like “Super heroes act on behalf of justice”, or “Super heroes save the world from the hands of the super villains”, the lecturer would help to consolidate their answers by emphasizing the importance of good characters, without which an individual may not have the will and perseverance to do good things [11], and highly competent people might pursue evil and cause great damage to society.

The basic concepts of character and character strengths are introduced in the first part of the lecture. As a term often used to describe “who we are”, “character” is commonly discussed in the literature of personality. The concept of character is first introduced in the framework of Keirsey’s [20] theory concerning personality, temperament and character in which temperament and character stand for individuals’ pre-dispositional and dispositional parts of personality, respectively. Specifically, temperament is something we were born with and is determined by genetics that cannot be changed. In an attempt to facilitate students’ understanding, examples of the behaviors in babies with different temperaments will be given. Character is the result of interactions between genetics and the environment. It is something we are prone to do as suggested by our genetics, but can be shaped by the environment. Then, various definitions of character strengths given by previous researchers in different domains are introduced. In particular, the common element among different definitions of character strengths, i.e. “personality traits with moral values”, are highlighted [6, 21].

After students become familiar with the conceptualization of character strengths, relevant positive traits emphasized in traditional mainstream cultures/philosophies, such as Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Western philosophies are presented. The teacher reminds students that although each school of philosophy has its unique emphasis on some character strengths, many of the characters are universally valued. Then a recent theory of character strengths based on the six-dimensional model of VIA is presented to students. Character strengths are viewed as a multidimensional construct composed of 24 well-identified positive traits [10]. Among the 24 traits, seven are given more explanation due to their important roles in service leadership. These include love of learning,

Table 2: Overall structure of the lecture.

Activity	Procedures	Materials
Warm-up activity (10 min)	“Super Hero vs. Super Villain”	Lecture PPT
Lecture (15 min)	Part I: what are character strengths?	Lecture PPT
Self-reflection (20 min)	“Do You Have a Strong Character?”	Lecture PPT Assessment tool
Lecture (10 min)	Part II: importance of character strengths	Lecture PPT
Group discussion (20 min)	“A Story that Impressed You Most”	Lecture PPT Appendix 1
Lecture (10 min)	Part III: ways to promote character strengths	Lecture PPT
Self-reflection (15 min)	“My Action Plan for Character Building”	Lecture PPT Appendix 2
Wrap up (5 min)	Part IV: conclusion	Lecture PPT
Sharing (5 min)	Sharing Invite two students to share their thoughts after taking this lecture.	N.A.

bravery, honesty, modesty, kindness, persistence and gratitude. The importance of these positive traits in a life of pleasure, engagement and meaning of the human kind is highlighted [9, 11]. Students are reminded that as character strengths are mainly acquired through learning and modeling, individuals could possess different levels of character strengths because of their different upbringing and learning experiences [11]. People may also put various values on different character strengths. The lecturer can share one's own performance in different character strengths to facilitate students' understanding.

A self-assessment activity titled "Do you have a strong character?" is presented to help students reflect on their own character strengths. Students are invited to complete a modified self-reported questionnaire (in both English and Chinese) concerning the seven character strengths learned in the previous section, with items extracted from the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) [9]. After students finish assessing themselves with the questionnaire, they are further encouraged to reflect on whether the scores are consistent with their self-understanding and to discuss the scores with their group members. To help students understand the meaning of their scores and have more interest in self-reflection, the lecturer may disclose and interpret his/her own scores in class and highlight that the scores are able to tell one's strengths from one's weaknesses in a relative sense. Several students are also invited to share their scores and self-understanding with other classmates. The lecturer summarizes the activity by pointing out that lower scores in certain areas may not necessarily mean weaknesses. Instead, they may be strengths simply not as strong as other character strengths [11]. In addition, the teacher would remind students that the scores might be biased by one's habit of scaling such that the same absolute value of a score may mean different things for different people. This explanation is important because a student who gets lower scores than other group members might feel worse than others and feel discouraged to promote his/her character strengths, which is a departure from the original intention of strengths-based education [22].

After students have gained basic knowledge about the concept, the importance of character strengths is introduced and discussed in the second part. The relationship between different character strengths and various desirable developmental outcomes, such as school success, high level of work satisfaction and marital satisfaction and healthy life-long development, are presented [15, 23–25]. To help students understand the positive effects of different character strengths on one's life, character strengths are categorized into traits more relevant to the "heart" and

traits more relevant to the "head". Specifically, character strengths related to the head such as "perspective", "prudence" and "love of learning" will lead to better academic performance, whereas character strengths related to the heart, such as "gratitude", "hope", "zest", "love" and "curiosity" will lead to higher life satisfaction and job satisfaction across all occupational types and job positions. The teacher then highlights the importance of the "heart-related" character strengths in leading a happy and fulfilling life, which are relatively ignored in formal education compared to the "head-related" traits [11]. Knowing the positive effects of different character strengths on individuals' personal and societal well-being, their relevance to leadership is further introduced in a process model [13] that explains the role of character strengths, personality and motivation to effective leadership [12].

To reinforce students' appreciation for the importance of character strengths, a group discussion ("a story that impressed you most") is designed as the learning activity. Students are required to recall impressive stories they have listened to or movies they have watched before and think about which character strengths are reflected in the major characters of the story using a worksheet (see Appendix 1). Then they discuss with their group members and pick a story that impresses the group most. The group then prepares a short presentation on the major content of the story, the related character strengths and the reasons why they are impressed by this story. Before group discussion, the teacher can introduce a story that he or she feels impressed by showing a movie trailer to students and then share the character strengths reflected in the movie as well as how the teacher feels and interprets these traits. Following this format, students discuss in groups about their favorite story, complete the worksheet and prepare their group presentation. Several groups are invited to make their presentations to the class after the discussion. The lecturer then summarizes the activity by highlighting that different character strengths have different positive effects in various contexts. Although no one is perfect, as long as people can find out their own character strengths and make the best of these traits, they will be able to lead a meaningful life.

In the third part of the lecture, several ways to promote the development of character strengths are discussed. Primarily, students are shown a quote by Aristotle that "virtue or character is not an innate characteristic. It can be learned". This is to remind students that even though they may lack certain character strengths at present, as long as they are willing to make efforts, they will eventually develop these positive traits. The teacher then introduces the recommended steps of strength-based

education. Students are encouraged to first identify their own character strengths, then to develop their weaker character strengths when applying their strongest strengths as scaffolding and eventually formulate new strategies and utilize existing resources to further develop their strengths [19]. For this part, a self-reflection exercise is performed to help students explore their own ways to develop character strengths. Students are invited to reflect on their own character strengths and figure out one particular area that they wish to improve most. They are then asked to create an action plan for promoting that character strength using a distributed worksheet (see Appendix 2).

To stimulate students' learning motivation, the teacher can share his/her own experience and action plan with students as a demonstration. For example, the teacher may identify his/her weakness in the area of perseverance. He/she may delay in most of the tasks such that he/she wouldn't start working until the deadline is approaching. In trying to avoid the task, he/she would do something irrelevant such as watching a TV series or surfing on the Internet aimlessly. He/she identified it as the weakness to improve most because it has severely affected the quality of his/her life and work performance, which makes him/her often feel guilty and anxious.

His/her goals of promoting perseverance may include: (1) face difficulties directly and be more persistent; (2) practice better time management; and (3) foster positive feelings and self-esteem. To achieve these goals, his/her action plans may include: (1) make detailed plans for difficult tasks (i.e. sub-tasking); (2) keep track of his/her progress; and (3) conduct self-monitoring through self-reward and self-punishment. His/her expected changes in life may include: (1) feeling competent in dealing with work and life and (2) feeling proud of himself/herself. After listening to the example by the teacher, the students will complete the worksheet based on their own reflections and make an action plan. Several students will be invited to share in class. The lecturer wraps up by highlighting the creation of a strengths growth plan as a critical component to their strengths development.

The last part of the lecture is a conclusion. The teacher summarizes the whole lecture and provides students with a list of take-home messages that further emphasize the

importance of developing character strengths in becoming a good service leader. Students will also be invited to reflect on the most relevant core beliefs in service leadership to this lecture and elaborate on how character strengths are related to these core beliefs.

Further reflection and additional topics on character strengths

There are several ways to stimulate the students' interests in the topic of character strengths. First, various assessment tools can be used to help students understand their character strengths such as bravery and honesty. Assessment results constitute interesting information for self-reflection and group reflection. Second, character strengths with reference to Chinese cultural values, such as Confucian virtues, are good topics for discussion. In particular, students can be encouraged to consider whether character strengths emphasized in the traditional Chinese culture are still relevant in contemporary world. Third, students could be invited to reflect on their motives for developing character strengths such as honesty. Should this be governed by an instrumental motive? Should one act honestly because of social motives (i.e. "good boy" or "good girl" mentality)? Fourth, as an academic debate, students can be led to consider the question of whether character strengths are universal or relativistic across cultures. Finally, the teacher can share with the students the basic tenets of the positive development approach and invite students to consider the assumptions of the approach and discuss how the approach may help young people in Hong Kong. Some examples of positive youth development programs in the secondary school settings [26, 27] and higher education sector [28, 29] can be shared with the students.

Acknowledgments: The Service Leadership project at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University was financially supported by the Victor and William Fung Foundation. The authorship of the paper is equally shared by the first and second authors.

Appendix 1

Lecture Six: Character Strengths and Service Leadership

A Story That Impressed You Most

Please recall stories you have learned which are touching, inspiring, or encouraging, and tell us which one impressed you most. It can be a movie, a TV play, a book, or a real story about somebody, in which some human character strengths are well portrayed.

You need to give a brief introduction of the story first, and then identify the character strengths promoted in that story and explain how they are reflected. Discuss with your group members and work on this task jointly.

I learned the story from
It is about
I found character strengths related to

Appendix 2

Lecture Six: Character Strengths and Service Leadership

My Action Plan for Character Building

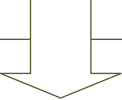
With reference to the seven character strengths we highlighted in this lecture—love of learning, honesty, perseverance, gratitude, moral code, humility, and courage, please identify one you want to promote most. Make a character-building plan for yourself that is concrete and workable, in which at least three personal acts should be specified to guide your subsequent practice.

My goals:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



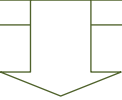
My action plan:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

...



My expected changes in life:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

...

References

1. Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department. Hong Kong statistics. Hong Kong: census and statistics department, the Government of the Hong Kong administrative region, 2013. Available at: <http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp250.jsp?ID=0&productType=8%20&subjectID=250&tableID=036>. Accessed: 14 Oct 2013.
2. The Hong Kong Institute of Service Leadership and Management. HKI-SLAM Introduction. Hong Kong: The Hong Kong institute of service leadership and management, 2011. Available at: <http://hki-slam.org/index.php?r=article&catid=1>. Accessed: 31 May 2013.
3. Chung P. Hong Kong Institute of Service Leadership and Management curriculum framework. Hong Kong: Hong Kong institute of leadership and management, 2011.
4. The Hong Kong Institute of Service Leadership and Management. Launch of the Li & Fung Service Leadership Initiative (SLI). The Hong Kong institute of service leadership and management, 2011. Available at: <http://hki-slam.org/files/press/SLI%20Announcement%20Letter%20and%20Attachment%20111031.pdf>. Accessed: 31 May 2013.
5. Shek DT, Yu L, Ma CM, Sun RC, Liu TT. Development of a credit-bearing service leadership subject for university students in Hong Kong. *Int J Adolesc Med Health* 2013;25: 353–61.

6. Baumrind D. Reflections on character and competence. In: Colby A, James J, Hart D, editors. *Competence and character through life*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998:1–28.
7. Sperry L. *Corporate therapy and consulting*. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1996.
8. Park N, Peterson C. Methodological issues in positive psychology and the assessment of character strengths. In: Ong AD, van Dulmen M, editors. *Handbook of methods in positive psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006:292–305.
9. Peterson C, Seligman ME. *Character strengths and virtues: a handbook and classification*. New York: Oxford/American Psychological Association, 2004.
10. Peterson C, Park N. Character strengths and virtues: their role in well-being. In: Donaldson SI, Csikszentmihalyi M, Nakamura J, editors. *Applied positive psychology: improving everyday life, health, schools, work, and society*. New York: Hove: Psychology Press, 2011:49–62.
11. Park N. Building strengths of character: keys to positive youth development. *Reclaiming Child Youth* 2009;18:42–7.
12. Cropanzano R, James K, Citera M. A goal hierarchy model of personality, motivation, and leadership. *Res Organ Behav* 1992;15:267–322.
13. Sosik JJ, Cameron JC. Character and authentic transformational leadership behavior: expanding the ascetic self toward others. *J Consult Psychol* 2010;62:251–69.
14. Bass BM. *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press, 1985.
15. Scales PC, Benson PL, Leffert N, Blyth DA. Contributions of developmental assets to the prediction of thriving among adolescents. *Appl Dev Sci* 2000;4:27–46.
16. Park N, Peterson C, Seligman ME. Strengths of character and well-being. *J Soc Clin Psychol* 2004;23:603–19.
17. Park N. Character strengths and positive youth development. *Ann Am Acad Polit Soc Sci* 2004;591:40–54.
18. Lopez SJ, Louis MC. The principles of strengths-based education. *J Coll Character* 2009;10:1–8.
19. Anderson EC. What is strengths-based education? a tentative answer by someone who strives to be a strengths-based educator. Azusa Pacific University, 2004. Available at: <http://strengths.uark.edu/documents/what-is-strengths-based-education.pdf>. Accessed on August 20, 2013.
20. Keirse D. *Please understand me II: temperament, character, intelligence*. Del Mart: Prometheus Nemesis, 1998.
21. Park N, Peterson C. The cultivation of character strengths. In: Ferrari M, Potworowski G, editors. *Teaching for wisdom*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2009:57–75.
22. Clifton DO, Harter JK. Investing in strengths. In: Cameron KS, Dutton JE, Quinn RE, editors. *Positive organizational scholarship*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2003:111–21.
23. Colby A, Damon W. *Some do care: contemporary lives of moral commitment*. New York: Free Press, 1992.
24. Seligman MEP. *Authentic happiness: using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York: Free Press, 2002.
25. Weissberg RP, Greenberg MT. School and community competence-enhancement and prevention programs. In: Damon W, editor. *Handbook of child psychology*. New York: John Wiley, 1997:877–954.
26. Shek DT, Sun RC, editors. *Development and evaluation of positive adolescent training through holistic social programs (P.A.T.H.S.)*. Heidelberg: Springer, 2013.
27. Shek DT, Sun RC. The Project P.A.T.H.S. in Hong Kong: development, training, implementation, and evaluation. *J Pediatr Adolesc Gynecol* 2013;26:52–9.
28. Shek DT. Promotion of holistic development in university students: a credit-bearing subject on leadership and intrapersonal development. *Best Pract Mental Health* 2013;9:47–61.
29. Shek DT, Sun RC. Post-course subjective outcome evaluation of a course promoting leadership and intrapersonal development in university students in Hong Kong. *Int J Disabil Hum Dev* 2013;12:193–201.