

Development and validation of assessment tools on service leadership knowledge, attitude, and behavior

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Introduction

With the growth of service industries in the global world, there is a need to ask how we can nurture leadership in service economies. This is important because the mode of production and requirements of the leaders are different in manufacturing and service economies (1). While the focus in manufacturing industries is on “do things right,” the focus of services economies is on “do the right things.” Besides, leadership style in service economies is often “bottom-up,” which is different from the “top-down” style in manufacturing industries. In view of the unique features of service economies, we need a leadership model which can meet the needs of service economies (2).

To address the issue of service leadership in the changing economies, Dr. Po Chung (Co-founder of DHL International and Chairman Emeritus of DHL Express (Hong Kong) Ltd. and Chairman of the Hong Kong Institute of Service Leadership and Management Limited (HKI-SLAM)) proposed the Service Leadership Model. According to HKI-SLAM (3), service leadership “is about satisfying needs by consistently providing quality personal service to everyone one comes into contact with, including one's self, others, groups, communities, systems, and environments. A service leader is a ready, willing and able, on-the-spot socialized entrepreneur who possesses relevant task competencies and is judged by superiors, peers, subordinates, and followers to exhibit appropriate character strengths and a caring social disposition”. The Service Leadership Model is based on Chung's seminal works on service reborn (4), 25 principles essential for service leadership (5) and 12 dimensions of one's personal brand (6).

To promote Service Leadership education in the publicly-funded universities in Hong Kong, Li and

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Fung Foundation provided HK\$40 million to support a project on Service Leadership Education in Hong Kong. In the eight universities funded by the University Grants Committee, researchers developed credit-bearing subjects, non-credit-bearing programs and curriculum materials. In some programs, some evaluation work was done using some tentative measures of service leadership qualities (7, 8).

Unfortunately, Service Leadership education has been hindered due to its lack of validated measures of Service Leadership knowledge, attitude and behavior. Similarly, the lack of related validated measures also hinders the development of Service Leadership research. The development of measures based on the Service Leadership Model is important for several reasons. First, as Service Leadership Model is still at its infancy and there is limited research underlying the concepts and theories of Service Leadership, validated measurement tools are vital to the future development of the model. Slavec and Drnovšek (9) argued that “effective measurement is a cornerstone of scientific research ... reliable and valid measures contribute to the legitimacy and development of a research field” (p. 39). Second, the scales would allow for investigations on the determinants and outcomes of effective Service Leadership qualities, and how these qualities are related to organizational effectiveness (2). Third, assessment tools in Service Leadership are important because they can be used to examine the effectiveness of related intervention programs. For example, it would be extremely important to understand whether Service Leadership training programs really promote Service Leadership qualities in the program participants.

Three areas of importance

There are three areas that should be assessed as far as Service Leadership qualities are concerned. The first area is Service Leadership knowledge. Assuming that we are asked to create a credit-bearing subject on Service Leadership, we have to ask what fundamental knowledge on Service Leadership will be included. Basically, Service Leadership knowledge includes core beliefs of the Service Leadership Model (such as everybody can be a leader) and components of effective Service Leadership (competence, moral

character and caring disposition). For example, as far as moral character is concerned, a service leader should appreciate the importance of morality and integrity and what constitutes an ethical leader (“know-what”). Besides, one must know the determinants of moral judgments such as motivation to act in a moral manner, moral reasoning, and reflection on one’s Personal Operating System. Regarding caring disposition, one should know its components, such as empathy, love, and sensitivity to others’ needs and emotions.

For attitude to Service Leadership, it basically addresses one’s beliefs and feelings about Service Leadership, such as whether one agrees to the core beliefs of Service Leadership and the basic ingredients of effective service leadership. Most important of all, it is important to assess whether one has a service mindset, such as care about oneself as well as others, and to be sensitive to others’ needs. Besides, whether one identifies with the importance of moral character, such as the degree of agreement with the importance of character strengths based on the Western literature and Confucian values based on Chinese philosophies.

For Service Leadership skills, an effective service leader should possess intrapersonal skills (such as resilience, emotional competence, social competence, courage and vision) as well as interpersonal skills (such as relationship building, team building and conflict resolution skills). Besides, service leaders should learn “maritime” leadership style combining both top-down and bottom-up leadership models and appreciate distributive leadership styles. As caring leaders, effective service leaders should also know the skills of developing others and mentorship abilities.

This special issue

Against the above background, there are several parts in this special issue. First, the Service Leadership Model as well as the ingredients on Service Leadership knowledge, attitude and behaviors (i.e., skills) are presented. Second, psychometric properties of three validated measures on Service Leadership knowledge, attitude and behavior are presented. In these papers, the internal consistency, convergent validity and factorial validity of the measures are

presented. Third, the psychosocial correlates and norms associated with these three measures of Service Leadership are presented in three papers. Through these papers, we attempt to establish the psychometric properties and norms of the scales assessing Service Leadership knowledge, attitude and behavior. It is our humble wish that the related work and the developed assessment tools can be used in the training, personnel decisions, intervention, and research contexts.

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