Promotion of service leadership in university students: Views of university students

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Abstract

To nurture service leaders of tomorrow and to help university students develop in a holistic manner, the "Service Leadership" subject was established at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). The current study examines the impact of the subject offered in 2015/16 academic year using the client satisfaction approach. A total of 106 university students completed an evaluation form assessing perceived program, instructors and effectiveness quality. The students reported a positive view of the program in both semesters. As predicted, there were significant inter-relationships amongst program content, instructor quality, and perceived effectiveness. Regarding predictors of program benefits, program and instructor quality showed a significant impact. For overall satis-faction, perceived benefits was the only significant predictor. The findings strongly suggest that the subject could promote the development of service leadership in students.

Keywords: Subjective outcome evaluation, service economy, service leadership, college students, Hong Kong

Introduction

With Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the service sector accounted for more than 93%, Hong Kong is fundamentally a service-oriented economy that has a much higher percentage share of the service sector than other developed Asian economies (1). Given that the service sector has been the leading force of Hong Kong's economic growth, it is expected that it will continue to make a major economic contribution in the coming future (2). After the handover of Hong Kong, there has been massive integration and collaboration with the fast-expanding Chinese market. For example, there is the development of the "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" ("Greater Bay Area"), a major national strategy that sets new pursuit of Mainland China to unite the

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resources and unleash its full economic potential. The Greater Bay Area (GBA) includes nine municipalities in Guangdong Province and two Special Administrative Regions (i.e., Hong Kong and Macau). This area is fast-growing and economically very active, with a total population of around 70 million people and a total GDP of around US$1.6 trillion in 2018 (3). The joint cooperation platform highlighted the importance of giving completely distinctive strengths of each area, elevating their role in economic growth development, and building a globally competitive modern system.

With the launch of the Individual Visit Scheme under the Mainland China and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement in July 2003, travelers from Mainland China were permitted to visit Hong Kong for individual purposes, which has led to an explosive expansion in retail and tourism industries (4). The scheme was implemented at different phases, with the first introduction at only 4 Guangdong cities and extended to cover 49 cities from 18 provinces. The number of total visitors to Hong Kong has increased tremendously in the past 15 years. The surge has led to a level that the number of visitors in Hong Kong alone surpassed the number of visitors in some countries. For example, Hong Kong provided warm hospitality to 54.3 million tourists in 2013, compared to 31.1 million by the United Kingdom, 10.4 million by Japan, and 6.5 million by Australia. Meanwhile, the Mainland China tourists have a tendency to stay shorter and more frequent in Hong Kong and have a significantly higher level of average daily spending of HK$ 3,593 than non-Mainland tourists of HK$1,970 in 2013. It was estimated that the scheme contribution to the Hong Kong economy in 2012 amounted to a total of HK$ 26.1 million, 1.3% of Hong Kong's GDP, and 114,280 in the number of jobs (4). The change of policy has opened up a massive amount of employment opportunities in the service industry, which, in some measure, supported the low unemployment rate sitting at 3.1 percent (5).

Despite the fact that unemployment rate at its record low in Hong Kong, the severe income and wealth inequality over the past years is growing recognition that moving up the ladder can be very challenging, suggesting most of the economy's income and wealth have been shifting to a small percentage of wealthy people and global corporations that have been accumulating assets and buying equities. Most societies that have prioritized economic growth have now reached a point where the disparity creates social tension and heightens the need for redistribution (6). The phenomenon emerges not only in Hong Kong. The decline in mobility and growing inequality are also causing threats to the American dream in the United States (7). Education is commonly considered as one of the known areas that can stop reinforcing inequalities generation to generation with its high correlation by increasing access to and improving the quality of education (8). The higher education across developed societies has substantially expanded in the last several decades. It is important that universities are ensuring the graduates have the knowledge and positive attributes that the evolving labor market needs. As in Hong Kong, the economy has presented both opportunities and challenges to the young people in entering the competitive labor market and having the chances of upward social mobility, which would typically opt for skilled and professional workers with good communication and management skills in leading and creating a society that thinks and innovates. In short, how to help university students to adapt to the challenges of the growing service economies is an important task for universities to achieve.

Besides the challenges of the changing service economies, young people in Hong Kong are also facing several other issues in their adolescence that might hinder them from bargaining for advantages in entering the competitive markets. For example, academic pressure in young people is particularly high in Hong Kong, and for those who cannot cope with academic pressure, they may have other mental health problems that required their attention, such as depression, anxiety, hopelessness, and even suicidal ideations (9). Materialistic orientation has become an emerging issue among youth (10). Contemporary young people in Hong Kong live in an age of material abundance that has led to many of them only targeted to get a step ahead in life and to accumulate wealth at an early age. According to the research conducted by the Commission on Youth (11), 20% to 30% of Hong Kong adolescents had material orientations and agreed that they would use unethical ways to accumulate wealth. About 6.6% of high school

students reported that they know classmates who are currently engaging in compensated dating (12, 13). Adolescents and university students in Hong Kong were also described as egocentrism and a lack of social responsibilities and civic engagement (14). Navigating the difficult job of teaching and the developmental challenges is certainly not easy, especially in Hong Kong. Along with the macro environment in society, there are many social obstacles from a global standpoint that are coming ahead of our younger generation.

Millennials, typically refer to individuals who were born between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s, are often labeled as self-centered, unmotivated, and disrespectful (15). This is a pivotal moment that Millennials are quickly advancing in their careers and taking leadership role inside of corporations, shifting from traditional leadership and hierarchical management style, and changing the work-life philosophies and company values along the way. The change is re-defining the power dynamics within organizations to a relatively flat culture and less bureaucracy where employees are empowered to contribute and make decisions through openness, collaboration, and transparency. Following the millennials are the Generation Z (i.e., a generation born between the mid-1990s to the early 2000s). Roughly speaking, these teenagers do not know life without the internet and technology and about to start stepping onto universities around the world. It is undoubtedly that the world shall embrace and expect a different leadership outlook from Generation Z once they begin entering the workforce and taking up management roles in the future. Therefore, it is important that the universities are allocating and providing more resources in equipping and nurturing the next generation's competitiveness to become successful leaders prior to joining the labor force with a nearly seamless experience and in leading our society with social skills and social competence. The younger generation is not merely the future of tomorrow – they are the potential leaders of today. Leadership is never easy, especially in light of the enormous challenges coming after them.

With the aim of establishing and strengthening service leadership education to the undergraduates in Hong Kong, the Victor and William Fung Foundation

and the Hong Kong Institute of Service Leadership and Management (HKI-SLAM) collaborated to launch the Fung Service Leadership Initiative. Eight public universities receiving funding from the University Grants Committee joined the project. In each university, courses, programs, and related educational materials were developed to meet its objectives of taking a holistic approach for nurturing and enhancing our university students with leadership competencies and capabilities for the most competitive service leadership mentality and practices. According to Chung (16), A service leader is "a ready, willing and able, on-the-spot 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." In a study of Shek and colleagues (17), they have highlighted 12 dimensions of leadership desirable qualities as "*service orientation (self and others), systems orientation (self, followers, habitat, and larger system), leadership competencies, moral character, caring disposition, personal qualities of a leader, everyone is (can be) a leader, self-leadership, the need for continuous improvement, mentoring followers, Chinese cultural values, and comprehensiveness and breadth of the model"* (p. 218). At The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), researchers have developed both credit-bearing subjects as well as noncredit-bearing leadership training programs

This study aims at evaluating the impact of the "Service Leadership" subject which was offered to students in semester 1 and 3 of the 2015/16 academic year at PolyU. The modified Subjective Outcome Evaluation Scale (SOES) was utilized for evaluation that examines the perceived satisfaction and impact of the subject. The scale included areas of assessment in program content (i.e., course design), program instructors (i.e., teaching skills), program benefits (i.e., enhancement of social competence), and overall satisfaction (i.e., global satisfaction of student participants). There are several expectations of the research findings: 1) if the program implemented as planned, most of the participants would give positive views towards all the measuring scales, and 2) in line with previous findings, we would expect significant correlation amongst the

different aspects of client satisfaction, including program quality, instructor quality, benefits of taking the course, and overall satisfaction.

Methods

The "Service Leadership" subject was offered to students at PolyU in semester 1 and 3 of the 2015/16 academic year. In the end of the semesters, all the students (semester 1: 42 students; semester 3: 64 students; overall: 106 students) were invited to complete a subjective outcome evaluation form to evaluate their perception of the program. Before they complete the evaluation form, the student participants were told about the purpose of the evaluation and were asked to fill out a written consent form. The evaluation form was self-administrated in paper-pencil based mode. They were given adequate time to complete all the items in the form, and teaching assistants were on site for any questions that bought by the students. All of the evaluation forms were collected their completion by the students.

Instruments

A modified "Subjective Outcome Evaluation Scale" (SOES) was used to examine the student participants' subjective perception of the "Service Leadership" subject. The SOES, which showed good psychometric properties (see Result section for details), was widely used in previous studies (18-20) to study the impact of the program based on the perception of program recipients (the students in the current study). The SOES is a 5-point Likert scale which comprised of several parts as follows:

1. Program Content (PC): Perception of students on the program, for example, objectives and design of the program, interaction between students, and classroom atmosphere, etc. (10 items). Examples of the items are "The content design of the curriculum is very good." and "The learning experience enhanced my interests towards the program."

2. Program Instructors (PI): 10 items related to students' perceptions of the instructor(s), including class preparation, professional attitude (i.e., "The instructor(s) showed good professional attitudes."), teaching skills (i.e., "The teaching skills of the instructor(s) were good."), class involvement (i.e., "The instructor(s) was (were) very involved."), and quality of interaction with students (i.e., "The instructor(s) had much interaction with the students.").

3. Program Benefits (PB): Student participants' perception of the perceived program benefits, for instance, the promotion of their social competence and personal development (18 items). Examples of the items are: "It has increased my competence in making sensible and wise choices" and "It has enabled me to understand the importance of situational task competencies, character strength and caring disposition in successful leadership."

4. In addition to the above-mentioned parts, there are two parts in the SOES that target understanding the global satisfaction and student participants' additional feedback:

5. Overall Satisfaction (OS): assessing the students' global satisfaction, such as recommending the program to their friends (i.e., "Will you suggest your friends to take this program?"), their intention to join the similar program in future (i.e., "Will you participate in similar programs again in the future?"), and satisfaction with the program in general (i.e., "On the whole, are you satisfied with this program?") through a 5-point Likert scale.

6. Four open-ended questions asking the student participants' program experience and their feedback to the program, such as their learning experience (i.e., "the most important thing you have learned from the program"), things that they most appreciated (i.e., "appreciate most in this course"), instructors (i.e., "comments about the instructor(s)"), and areas for improvement (i.e., "suggestions on the improvement area").

Data analyses

The statistical package of SPSS 25 (23) was used to analyze the collected data from the participants. The psychometrics properties of SOES showed good reliability in previous studies (e.g.: 19, 20-22). The psychometric properties, specifically the reliability, of the SOES was first examined. The score of each subscale items was added up and divided by the number of items in the subscale to create the composite measures of the subscale. Percentage analyses were then conducted to study the student participants' responses on the quantitative items (i.e., PC, PI, PB, and OS). The data was analyzed and reported separately by semesters (i.e., semester 1 and semester 3) and a combined group of student participants in overall score (i.e., combined both semesters). Correlation was performed to investigate the relationships amongst the subscales. The predictive effects of student participants' perception on PC, PI, PB, and OS were tested through multiple regression analyses.

Results

The mean, standard deviation, and reliability analyses of each subscale are shown in Table 1. Consistent with previous studies (19, 20), the SOES in the present study showed good reliability. For the combined group of students from both semesters, the overall Cronbach's alpha (α) in each of the subscales was .74 or above: PC (α = .87; Mean inter-item correlation = .41), PI (α = .93; Mean inter-item correlation = .58), PB (α = .94; Mean inter-item correlation = .48), and OS (α = .74; Mean inter-item correlation = .53). It supported that the SOES was internally consistent for the present study. The mean score in each of the subscale was above 4.0 (PC, M = 4.17; PI, M = 4.49; PB, M = 4.02; OS, M = 4.02).

As shown in Table 1 and 2, program content was positively perceived by the student participants (semester 1, M = 4.10; semester 3, M = 4.23; overall, M = 4.17). For instance, majority of the student participants rated agree or strongly agree that they liked the pleasant atmosphere in the classroom (overall = 97.2%), the clear program objective (overall = 95.3%), and rated a very positive evaluation of the program (overall = 94.3%). There were also more than 90% of the student participants (n = 98, 92.5%) agreed or strongly agreed the activities were carefully arranged, a great amount of peer interaction and the learning experience enhanced their interest towards the program. When they were asked to express their thoughts on what they most appreciated in this subject, they responded in several perspectives of the program, including

"This class has a lot of class activities and discussions, very interesting," "Relaxing environment to learn," and "Interactive lecture, using lots of activities and games for us to participate; instructor put lots of efforts to make the lectures more interesting."

Supported by the findings shown in Table 3, over 93% of the students in both semesters reported positive responses in all the items in PI. The students were highly satisfied with the program instructors' performance (semester 1, M = 4.45; semester 3, M = 4.52; overall, M = 4.49). There were about 99% of the student participants (105 out of 106) perceived that the instructors were very involved and encouraging for every students' participation. Also, about 98% of the students (104 out of 106) appreciated the instructors' professional attitude, the caring for the students, and the help offered to students when needed. The positive responses from the open-ended questions highlighted more to support the quantitative part: students' responses mentioned the well-organized and professionalism of the teaching team, such as

"Very (w)ell-prepared and caring lectures with a great team with passion for teaching, really learn a lot form lecture and also from the role model of the teacher." and "Instructor and other teachers were very well organized throughout all past lectures. I genuinely appreciate for involving many activities that I will not be able to find in other programs,"

and the teaching team's helpfulness and encouragement for students' participation, such as

"Willing to help students when they have questions. Encourage students to be active in class."

**Table 1. Cronbach's alphas, mean, standard deviation,
and mean of inter-item correlations of Subjective Outcome Evaluation**

Variable(s)	Semester 1 (*n* = 42)				Semester 3 (*n* = 64)				Overall (*n* = 106)			
	Mean	SD	α	*Mean*[#]	Mean	SD	α	*Mean*[#]	Mean	SD	α	*Mean*[#]
Program Content (PC: 10 items)	4.10	.41	.84	.36	4.23	.39	.88	.44	4.17	.40	.87	.41
Program Instructors (PI: 10 items)	4.45	.47	.93	.59	4.52	.41	.93	.57	4.49	.43	.93	.58
Program Benefits (PB: 18 items)	4.03	.51	.95	.54	4.02	.39	.93	.43	4.02	.44	.94	.48
Total Effectiveness (TE: 38 items)	4.16	.40	.96	.37	4.21	.33	.95	.35	4.19	.36	.95	.36
Overall Satisfaction (OS: 3 items)	4.00	.49	.80	.62	4.06	.52	.69	.48	4.02	.51	.74	.53

Note. Mean[#]: inter-item correlation.

Table 2. Summary of the participants' positive responses towards Program Content (PC)

Perceptions of program content [a]		Semester 1 (*n* = 42)		Positive Responses [b]		Semester 3 (*n* = 64)		Positive Responses [b]		Overall (*n* = 106)		Positive Responses [b]	
		M[†]	SD	n	%	M[†]	SD	n	%	M[†]	SD	n	%
1.	The objectives of the curriculum are very clear.	4.14	.52	39	92.9	4.20	.48	62	96.9	4.18	.49	101	95.3
2.	The content design of the curriculum is very good.	3.98	.75	35	83.3	4.19	.53	60	93.8	4.10	.63	95	89.6
3.	The activities were carefully arranged.	4.12	.63	38	90.5	4.19	.53	60	93.8	4.16	.57	98	92.5
4.	The classroom atmosphere was very pleasant.	4.24	.57	39	92.9	4.41	.50	64	100.0	4.34	.53	103	97.2
5.	There was much peer interaction amongst the students.	4.26	.62	38	90.5	4.31	.59	60	93.8	4.29	.60	98	92.5
6.	I participated in the class activities actively (including discussions, sharing, games, etc.).	4.05	.79	32	76.2	4.03	.73	48	75.0	4.04	.75	80	75.5
7.	I was encouraged to do my best.	3.90	.72	31	73.8	4.11	.65	54	84.4	4.03	.68	85	80.2
8.	The learning experience enhanced my interests towards the program.	4.05	.49	38	90.5	4.23	.56	60	93.8	4.16	.54	98	92.5
9.	Overall speaking, I have a very positive evaluation on the program.	4.21	.65	37	88.1	4.38	.52	63	98.4	4.31	.58	100	94.3
10.	On the whole, I like this program very much.	4.02	.60	35	83.3	4.27	.54	61	95.3	4.17	.58	96	90.5

Note. [a] Scores on the scale/subscale higher than or equal to 4 were treated as positive responses. [b] For every item, respondents with positive responses (options 4-5) are shown in the Table. [†] 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 3. Summary of the participants' positive responses
towards Program Instructors (PI)

Perceptions of program instructor [a]	Semester 1 (*n* = 42)				Semester 3 (*n* = 64)				Overall (*n* = 106)			
	M[†]	SD	Positive Responses [b]		M[†]	SD	Positive Responses [b]		M[†]	SD	Positive Responses [b]	
			n	%			n	%			n	%
1. The instructor(s) had a good mastery of the program.	4.31	.60	39	92.9	4.33	.59	60	93.8	4.32	.59	99	93.4
2. The instructor(s) was (were) well prepared for the lessons.	4.45	.63	39	92.9	4.52	.56	62	96.9	4.49	.59	101	95.3
3. The teaching skills of the instructor(s) were good.	4.29	.74	37	88.1	4.38	.52	63	98.4	4.34	.62	100	94.3
4. The instructor(s) showed good professional attitudes.	4.48	.55	41	97.6	4.55	.53	63	98.4	4.52	.54	104	98.1
5. The instructor(s) was (were) very involved.	4.60	.54	41	97.6	4.61	.49	64	100.0	4.60	.51	105	99.1
6. The instructor(s) encouraged students to participate in the activities.	4.55	.50	42	100.0	4.61	.52	63	98.4	4.58	.51	105	99.1
7. The instructor(s) cared for the students.	4.43	.63	41	97.6	4.52	.53	63	98.4	4.48	.57	104	98.1
8. The instructor(s) was (were) ready to offer help to students when needed.	4.43	.59	40	95.2	4.61	.49	64	100.0	4.54	.54	104	98.1
9. The instructor(s) had much interaction with the students.	4.38	.58	40	95.2	4.53	.53	63	98.4	4.47	.56	103	97.2
10. Overall speaking, I have a very positive evaluation on the instructor(s).	4.55	.50	42	100.0	4.56	.50	64	100.0	4.56	.50	106	100.0

Note. [a] Scores on the scale/subscale higher than or equal to 4 were treated as positive responses. [b] For every item, respondents with positive responses (options 4-5) are shown in the Table. [†] 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 4. Summary of the participants' positive responses towards Program Benefits (PB)

Perceptions of program benefits [a]		Semester 1 (*n* = 42)				Semester 3 (*n* = 64)				Overall (*n* = 106)			
		M[†]	SD	Positive Responses [b]		M[†]	SD	Positive Responses [b]		M[†]	SD	Positive Responses [b]	
				n	%			n	%			n	%
1.	It has enhanced my social competence.	4.00	.66	38	90.5	4.09	.50	59	92.2	4.06	.57	97	91.5
2.	It has improved my ability in expressing and handling my emotions.	3.95	.58	34	81.0	3.97	.50	55	85.9	3.96	.53	89	84.0
3.	It has enhanced my critical thinking.	4.00	.58	35	83.3	3.92	.51	53	82.8	3.95	.54	88	83.0
4.	It has increased my competence in making sensible and wise choices.	3.92	.64	34	81.0	3.94	.56	52	81.3	3.93	.59	86	81.1
5.	It has helped me make ethical decisions.	4.12	.60	36	87.8	3.95	.58	51	81.0	4.02	.59	87	83.7
6.	It has strengthened my resilience in adverse conditions.	4.21	.56	39	92.9	4.00	.64	51	79.7	4.08	.62	90	84.9
7.	It has strengthened my self-confidence.	4.00	.70	34	81.0	4.00	.64	51	79.7	4.00	.66	85	82.0
8.	It has helped me face the future with a positive attitude.	4.12	.63	38	90.5	4.17	.61	57	89.1	4.15	.61	95	89.6
9.	It has enhanced my love for life.	3.88	.80	32	76.2	3.83	.66	46	71.9	3.85	.71	78	73.6
10.	It has helped me explore the meaning of life.	3.95	.85	32	76.2	3.91	.68	48	75.0	3.92	.75	80	72.5
11.	It has enhanced my ability of self-leadership.	4.14	.65	38	90.5	4.06	.59	54	85.7	4.10	.61	92	87.6
12.	It has helped me cultivate compassion and care for others.	3.98	.72	33	78.6	3.97	.50	55	85.9	3.97	.59	88	83.0
13.	It has helped me enhance my character strengths comprehensively.	4.00	.66	35	83.3	4.06	.53	57	89.1	4.04	.58	92	86.8
14.	It has enabled me to understand the importance of situational task competencies, character strength and caring disposition in successful leadership.	4.12	.67	37	88.1	4.17	.58	58	90.6	4.15	.61	95	89.6
15.	It has promoted my sense of responsibility in serving the society.	3.90	.73	33	78.6	4.02	.60	53	82.8	3.97	.65	86	81.1
16.	It has promoted my overall development.	4.02	.78	34	81.0	411	.51	59	92.2	4.08	.63	93	87.7
17.	The theories, research and concepts covered in the program have enabled me to understand the characteristics of successful service leaders.	4.21	.72	40	95.2	4.16	.57	58	90.6	4.18	.63	98	92.5
18.	The theories, research and concepts covered in the program have helped me synthesize the characteristics of successful service leaders.	4.17	.70	40	95.2	4.09	.61	55	85.9	4.12	.64	95	89.6

Note. [a] Scores on the scale/subscale higher than or equal to 4 were treated as positive responses. [b] For every item, respondents with positive responses (options 4-5) are shown in the Table. [†] 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree.

The student participants' perception to program benefits (PB), shown in Table 4, were positively recognized (semester 1, M = 4.03; semester 3, M = 4.02; overall, M = 4.02). Majority of the student participants rated that the program massively improved their social competence (91.5%), for instance, a student responded that

"Though this subject teaches us how to be a good leader, more importantly, it teaches us how to get along well with the others."

They acquired a good and better understanding of the covered program content (i.e., theories, concept, and research) which related to a successful service leader (89.6% - 92.5%). There were similar responses from the students such as

"The E = MC², not only the theory, the knowledge but really how to practice it, how to use it applies to in daily life." and "I have learned how to be a professional service leader throughout participating in the lectures. Besides, I learned to accept others' ideas."

Compared with the other items in this subscale, items related to life, such as enhancing the love and meaning of life, were perceived particularly less influential to students (73.6% and 72.5%, respectively). This finding is consistent with previous findings (19, 24).

The responses to the three items that measure the student participants' overall satisfaction (OS) are shown in Table 5. They indicated high satisfaction with the subject (95.3%) and would recommend their friends to take this program (90.6%). However, they showed less interest in taking a similar subject in the future (67.9%). The pattern was similar to the previous studies (i.e., 19, 25, 26).

To study any differences in the subscales (i.e., PC, PI, and PB) across semesters, a one-way ANOVA was performed with the subscales as dependent variables and semesters (i.e., semester 1 and semester 3) as independent variables. Table 6 shows that there was no significant difference found in the analysis. This indicates the implication of no significant difference in how the student participants perceived the program in semester 1 and semester 3. Therefore, two sets of data from semester 1 and 3 were combined as a full set of an overall group to perform correlation and multiple regression analyses to study the correlations between subscales and predictive factors.

Table 7 presents the results of the correlation of each subscale. Consistent with previous studies (19, 24), there were significant correlations amongst the different measures in the client satisfaction survey. We further conducted multiple regression analyses to examine the factors predicting perceived benefits and overall satisfaction of the program (see Table 8). Both the PC and PI were predictive factors of PB (β = 0.76, p < .001; β = 0.24, p < .001). For the overall satisfaction of the program, PB was the only predictive factor (β = 0.44, p < .05).

Table 5. Summary of the participants' Overall Satisfaction (OS) with the program

Satisfaction with the program [a]		Semester 1 (n = 42)				Semester 3 (n = 64)				Overall (n = 106)			
		M	SD	Positive Responses [b]		M	SD	Positive Responses [b]		M	SD	Positive Responses [b]	
				n	%			n	%			n	%
1.	Will you suggest your friends to take this program? [c]	4.10	.48	39	92.9	4.20	.62	57	89.1	4.16	.57	96	90.6
2.	Will you participate in similar programs again in the future? [c]	3.74	.73	30	71.4	3.78	.84	42	65.6	3.76	.80	72	67.9
3.	On the whole, are you satisfied with this program? [d]	4.10	.48	39	92.9	4.20	.48	62	96.9	4.16	.48	101	95.3

Note. [a] Scores on the scale/subscale higher than or equal to 4 were treated as positive responses. [b] For every item, respondents with positive responses (options 4-5) are shown in the Table. [c] 1 = Definitely will not, 2 = Will not, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Will, 5 = Definitely will. [d] 1 = Very dissatisfied, 2 = Moderately dissatisfied, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Satisfied, 5 = Very satisfied.

Table 6. One-way ANOVA comparing the evaluations on the program of participants in different grade levels

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Program Content	Between Groups	.45	1	.45	2.81
	Within Groups	16.73	104	.16	
	Total	17.18	105		
Program Instructors	Between Groups	.14	1	.14	.76
	Within Groups	19.69	104	.19	
	Total	19.83	105		
Program Benefits	Between Groups	.00	1	.00	.00
	Within Groups	19.53	101	.19	
	Total	19.53	102		
Total Effectiveness	Between Groups	.06	1	.06	.49
	Within Groups	13.31	101	.13	
	Total	13.38	102		
Overall Satisfaction	Between Groups	.19	1	.19	.72
	Within Groups	27.17	104	.26	
	Total	27.36	105		

Table 7. Correlations coefficients among the subscales

Variable(s)	1	2	3	4	5
Program Content	1				
Program Instructors	.61***	1			
Program Benefits	.74***	.36***	1		
Total Effectiveness	.91***	.70***	.90***	1	
Overall Satisfaction	.64***	.39*	.58***	.64***	1

Note. $*p < .05$; $***p < .001$.

Table 8. Multiple regression analyses predicting perceived benefits and overall satisfaction

Predictor(s)	Program Benefits				Overall Satisfaction			
	B	SE	β	R^2	B	SE	β	R^2
Program Content	0.69	.04	.76***	.86	0.40	.23	.31	.43
Program Instructors	0.20	.04	.24***		-.14	.125	-.12	
Program Benefits					0.63	.028	.44*	

Note. $p < .05$; $***p < .001$.

Discussion

The study was to evaluate the impact of the "Subjective Leadership" subject that was offered to students at PolyU in both semester 1 and semester 3 in the academic year 2015/16 based on the client satisfaction approach. Using the modified SOES with a 5-point scale, we examined four dimensions of the students' perception towards the subject, including program content (i.e., the design and objective of the subject), program instructors (i.e., class preparation and teaching skills of instructor), program benefits (i.e., promotion of psychosocial competence and personal development), and overall satisfaction (i.e.,

program recommendation to friends and intention to take a similar subject in the future). There were also four open-ended questions looking for comprehensive and constructive information that could support the statistical findings and provide a broader perspective in understanding the students' perceptions.

The subject "Service Leadership" aimed to promote the service leadership qualities and overall development of university students. In summary, the results were consistent with our prediction that the students expressed positive perception with the mean score above 4.0 in each of the four subscales - PC, PI, PB, and OS. The results are reliable, as compared with the previous studies (18-20). Results of the one-way ANOVA showed that the students in semester 1 and semester 3 had no significant difference in the results of all the subscales, which allowed them to view and analyze the students in two semesters as one group on correlations between subscales and predictive factors of program benefits and overall satisfaction.

The student participants in both semesters with an overall mean score of 4.17 reported positive evaluation on the overall program content, such as clear program objectives, carefully planned class activities, and a great environment for learning. The program was very stimulating to the students that they appreciated the interactive lectures, which provided a sufficient amount of time on peer interaction to make the class more interesting and relaxing. In assessing instructors' quality subscale, the majority of the students (more than 90%) with an average mean score of 4.49 rated with positive responses in all the measured items. All the students rated positively on the instructors' evaluation. The results from open-ended questions echoed with the statistical findings that elucidated the professionalism and well-organization of the teaching instructors that they believed this type of quality teaching will not be able to find in other similar programs. The encouragement and helpfulness from instructors helped each of the students get involved in the activities and ensured that their needs were being met. Further, most of the students with an average response score of 4.02 in the program benefits subscale found that the program improved their social competence and helped them understand the concept of service leadership. The covered materials in the subject, such as the research

concepts, supported them to better understand the attributes of being an effective service leader. However, there were only about 70% of the students perceived that the program enhanced their love for life and the exploration of the meaning of life. This may be due to the short duration of the subject. More than 90% of the students reported high overall satisfaction towards the program and would recommend their friends to join the program.

For inter-correlations between all the subscales of SOES, there were significant positive relationships with the strength ranging from 0.36 to 0.74. Inconsistent with the results in previous studies that only perceived program content predicted program benefits (19, 25), the current study found that both program quality and instructors' quality were significant predictors of program benefits. The relationship implies the importance of both the subject matter and performance of the instructors shape the learning outcomes. It was beyond any doubt that the perception of the students towards the benefits they received was highly dependent on how an instructor delivered a comprehensive program structure in the program content. The students highly valued the benefits of the program because the combination of a wide range of skills and abilities that they have learned in the program along with the thoughtful instructors would be beneficial to them in having a competitive edge in the labor market and advancing their personal development. In addition, program benefits was a significant predictor of overall satisfaction. It was not consistent with past studies that program content and program benefits explained overall satisfaction (25). The high satisfaction could be due to the overall view of students towards the program benefits that were predicted by the program content and program instructors to willingly make a recommendation to their friends in joining this program.

The "Service Leadership" subject was found to be effective in satisfying the needs of university students in promoting the important qualities of successful service leaders and advocating positive youth development. The results were aligned with past studies that participants held a positive perception of the program in its content, instructors, and benefits (19, 20, 25, 26). The results in the current study also had an evidently higher percentage of positive responses

in program content, quality of program instructors, and program benefits as compared to the reported percentage of positive responses that collected from those who signed up for the "Service Leadership" subject in the academic years of 2012/13 (19), 2013/14 (20,26), and 2014/15 (25). The improved perception from students could be partly due to the fact of continuous revision of the program content based on the feedback from previous students and the instructors' familiarity with ways of delivering the knowledge and experiences to the students.

However, we identified several weaknesses of this study. First, future studies should consider taking an approach that examines other factors which might have an influential effect on the perception towards the program for evaluation, such as program participation (e.g., attendance) and duration of the program lectures. Second, it might also worth exploring the gender relations interactions between instructors and students in the program, suggesting two gender effects that the views of male or female students have on the same- or opposite-sex instructors. Third, the comparison of different evaluation methods, such as objective measure and in-depth qualitative reflections and narratives, are necessary to explore their perception of the learning experience.

Traditionally, leadership style may have been associated with a stronger emphasis on the hierarchical structure to enable and empower the employees to excel. While millennials are gradually taking leadership roles and the Generation Z will begin entering the labor market, it is important for the universities to equip their students in reaching full potentials and advancing their personal development. Obviously, the subject "Service Leadership" is a good way to equip students with leadership qualities in the rapidly changing service economies.

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Ethical compliance

The authors have stated all possible conflicts of interest within this work. The authors have stated all sources of funding for this work. If this work involved human participants, informed consent was received from each individual. If this work involved human participants, it was conducted in accordance with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki. If this work involved experiments with humans or animals, it was conducted in accordance with the related institutions' research ethics guidelines.

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