

## Service leadership education in an era of service economy

**Daniel TL Shek<sup>1,\*</sup>, PhD, FHKPS, BBS,  
SBS, JP, Xiaoqin Zhu<sup>1</sup>, PhD,  
and Joav Merrick<sup>2-5</sup>, MD, MMedSci, DMSc**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Applied Social Sciences,  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University,  
Hong Kong, PR China

<sup>2</sup>Division of Adolescent Medicine, Department  
of Pediatrics, Kentucky Children's Hospital,  
University of Kentucky School of Medicine,  
Lexington, Kentucky, USA

<sup>3</sup>National Institute of Child Health and Human  
Development, Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>4</sup>Department of Pediatrics, Mt Scopus Campus,  
Hadassah Hebrew University Medical Center,  
Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>5</sup>Center for Healthy Development, School of Public  
Health, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

### Introduction

In different parts of the world, economies have been changing from an industrial mode to a service mode (1-3). While industries such as computer and automobile manufacturing still exist in different parts of the world, there is a gradual integration of the traditional industrial production with service provision. Besides differences in production processes between the industrial and service economies (e.g., assembly line production versus production of reliable service), the desired leadership qualities of the two economies are also very different. While desired leadership in industrial economy is more top-down, it is more bottom-up in service economy (4).

In the “traditional” leadership models which closely related to industrial economies, leadership generally focuses on production outcomes and is commonly conceived in terms of leadership competencies, such as effective problem-solving and skills to make wise management decisions. While these attributes are important, their sole existence is not adequate for effective leadership in service economies. As service provision involves both the service provider and the service recipient(s), whether service providers have ethics and moral responsibilities is particularly important because quality control is commonly performed by the service providers (e.g., teachers and brokers). In addition, whether a leader cares about other people, including the service recipients and the followers, is an important leadership attribute in service economies. Basically, the mission of a service leader should not be just geared towards maximization of profit without caring about other people's benefits (5, 6).

Because of the changing requirements of effective leaders in service economies, there is a need to nurture leaders with leadership competence, ethics and caring attributes. The notion of “service leadership” was put forward by Po Chung, Co-

---

\* **Correspondence:** Daniel TL Shek, PhD, FHKPS, BBS, SBS, JP, Associate Vice President (Undergraduate Programme), Chair Professor of Applied Social Sciences and Li and Fung Professor in Service Leadership Education, Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hungghom, Hong Kong, PR China. Email: daniel.shek@polyu.edu.hk

Founder of DHL International. He argued that effective service leaders should have the attributes of generic leadership competence, moral character and caring disposition (3 Cs). Together with the support from the Victor and William Fung Foundation, Po Chung initiated the Service Leadership Education Initiative where eight Government-funded universities in Hong Kong were given grants to develop curriculum materials on service leadership. To mark the success of this initiative, two international conferences were held in 2014 and 2016, respectively (7, 8).

At The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), both credit-bearing subjects and non-credit-bearing programs have been developed since the inception of this initiative. For credit-bearing subjects, a 2-credit subject was developed under the old 3-year undergraduate program and a 3-credit subject entitled “Service Leadership” was developed under the new 4-year undergraduate program. Besides Hong Kong, we also offered the “Service Leadership” subject in Cambodia and Xian in the form of intensive summer course. To promote service leadership attributes among the students, we also designed a service-learning subject to nurture the service leadership qualities among students through serving others. For non-credit-bearing programs, we designed leadership training programs for Wofoo Leaders’ Network. We also included the intensive service leadership programs for students from PolyU, Peking University and Xian Jiaotong University.

To understand the impact of service leadership education on the development of students, we have conducted systematic evaluation for the education programs developed. Primarily, we have used objective outcome evaluation via the one-group pretest-posttest design to assess the changes of the students after they completed the subjects or programs. Basically, there are research findings showing that students had positive changes in terms of improved knowledge, attitude and behavior on service leadership and enhanced well-being. Second, we used subjective outcome evaluation to understand the views of students toward the subject or training program, instructor or trainer, and the perceived benefits. Finally, qualitative evaluation via personal reflection worksheets, individual interviews or focus groups has been conducted to understand students’

learning experiences and how they have benefited from the service leadership education. Taken as a whole, previous evaluation studies have demonstrated that service leadership subjects and programs are effective in promoting service leadership qualities and well-being among student participants (9-12).

## This special issue

In this special issue, we report evaluation findings based on different service leadership subjects and programs. Generally speaking, the reported findings replicated the previous evaluation findings of the Service Leadership Education Initiatives. These findings consistently and strongly suggest that these initiatives can help to promote service leadership attributes in young people. To build up the academic and professional foundation of service leadership education, these evaluation initiatives are very important. When China is gradually evolving to service economy, we earnestly hope that young people can be nurtured to be effective service leaders who possess competence, character and care.

## References

- [1] Chung PPY, Elfassy R. The 12 dimensions of a service leader. New York: Lexingford, 2016.
- [2] Chung, PPY, Ip, S. Pillars of a service hub. New York: Lexingford, 2016.
- [3] Chung, PPY, Bowie, R. From startup to global upstart. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017.
- [4] Shek DTL, Chung PPY, Leung H. Manufacturing economy vs. service economy: Implications for service leadership. *Int J Disabil Hum Dev* 2015;14:205-15. doi: 10.1515/ijdhhd-2015-0402.
- [5] Shek DTL, Chung PPY, Leung H. How unique is the service leadership model? A comparison with contemporary leadership approaches. *Int J Disabil Hum Dev* 2015;14:217-31. doi: 10.1515/ijdhhd-2015-0403.
- [6] Shek DTL, Lin L. Core beliefs in the service leadership model proposed by the Hong Kong Institute of Service Leadership and Management. *Int J Disabil Hum Dev* 2015;14:233-42. doi: 10.1515/ijdhhd-2015-0404.
- [7] Shek DTL, Chung PPY, eds. Promoting service leadership qualities in university students: The case of Hong Kong. Singapore: Springer, 2015.

- [8] Shek DTL, Chung PPY, Lin L, Merrick J, eds. Service leadership education for university students. New York: Nova Science, 2017.
- [9] Shek DTL, Lin L, Xie Q. Service leadership education for university students in Hong Kong: A qualitative evaluation study. *Int J Child Adolesc Health* 2016; 9(2): 235-43.
- [10] Shek DTL, Lin L. Service leadership education in the global youth leadership programme: A qualitative evaluation. *Int J Child Adolesc Health* 2016;9(2):245-52.
- [11] Shek DTL, Wu J, Lin L, Pu EX. Qualitative evaluation of a service leadership subject in a Chinese context. *Int J Disabil Hum Dev* 2017;16:433-41. doi: 10.1515/ijdh-2017-7012.
- [12] Shek DTL, Zhu X, Lin L. Evaluation of an intensive service leadership course in mainland China. *Int J Child Adolesc Health* 2017;10:223-31

Copyright of International Journal of Child & Adolescent Health is the property of Nova Science Publishers, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.