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Running title: Service leadership education at PolyU

Service leadership education at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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Abstract: The present paper outlines the achievements of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Poly U) in the 3-year Fung Service Leadership Initiative. In terms of curriculum development, PolyU has developed and offered several credit-bearing subjects and non-credit-bearing programs. Utilizing different evaluative strategies, both quantitative and qualitative data suggest that the credit-bearing subjects and non-credit-bearing programs yielded positive impacts on students' development. In terms of research, publications on service leadership have been generated from the project, including journal articles, conference paper presentations, books and book chapters. Reflections and lessons learned from the three-year journey are shared. Particularly, insights on collaboration, research and evaluation, as well as recommendations on how to take the initiative forward both in terms of research and practice are discussed.

Keywords: leadership, service leadership, Chinese, university students, service economy

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Introduction

The present paper outlines the achievements and related experiences pertinent to the Fung Service Leadership Initiative (2012-2015) implemented at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. There are several sections in this paper. First, credit-bearing Service Leadership subjects developed in this period are presented. Second, non-credit-bearing Service Leadership programs are described. Third, research studies in the Service Leadership Initiative are outlined. Finally, experience gained and lessons learned are discussed.

Teaching activities

As a part of the Fung Service Leadership Initiative sponsored by the Victor and William Fung Foundation to promote service leadership, four credit-bearing courses and four non-credit-bearing programs have been offered to students at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) and students of other tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. In addition, research activities have also been undertaken by the PolyU Team. The present report outlines both teaching and research activities at PolyU since the inception of the Initiative in 2012.

For credit-bearing subjects, four subjects were developed and offered to the students. Primarily, a 2-credit subject “Service Leadership” (APSS2820) was developed and offered to students studying under the 3-year undergraduate curriculum (i.e., old curriculum for A-level students). This subject was offered to students in the 2012/13 and 2013/14 academic years ($N = 190$). Upon completion of the subject, students are expected to gain knowledge on the theories and concepts related to service leadership and to appreciate and understand the importance of service leadership to one’s personal development and the society. Modeled after the 2-credit subject, another 3-credit subject entitled “Service Leadership” (APSSA1A21) in the Cluster Area Requirement was developed for students of the 4-year curriculum (i.e., the new 4-year curriculum for graduates of the Diploma of Secondary Education Examination). This subject includes an additional component on the critical appraisal of the Service Leadership model proposed by HKI-SLAM and other major leadership models. To enhance the English proficiency of students, this subject also includes a component on English Reading and Writing requirements. The subject was offered twice since the 2014/15 academic year ($N = 176$). Based on APSS2820, a free elective 3-credit “Service Leadership” subject was developed for students studying in the 4-year curriculum. The subject is offered by the Department of Applied Social Sciences. This subject focuses on the critical evaluation of different leadership models, including the HKI-SLAM model.

In addition to the above credit-bearing subjects that are “classroom-based”, a service learning subject on service leadership utilizing both classroom and outside classroom teaching and learning strategies has been developed. A subject entitled “Service Leadership through Serving Children and Families with Special Needs” (APSS2S09) was designed to enable students to know the core attributes of service leaders, apply the service leadership concepts and skills through the engagement of community-based service activities, develop self-awareness of sharing and empathy with others and the community, and reflect on their service leadership qualities, particularly intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies. To date, students have provided services in special schools admitting boys with behavioral and emotional problems (Society of Boys’ Centres), a non-governmental organization providing service for pre-school children with developmental disorders and mental retardation (Heep Hong Society), a drug rehabilitation agency (Christian Zheng Sheng College) and schools admitting students with social and economic

deprivation (schools in Project We Can initiated and financially supported by Wharf). The subject was offered to students since the 2013/14 academic year ($N = 341$).

Besides credit-bearing subjects, non-credit-bearing service leadership programs have also been designed. A modified version of the Service Leadership subject (4.5 days) was offered to students joining the Global Youth Leadership Program jointly organized by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Peking University in Beijing in July 2013 ($N = 48$). Several service leadership training workshops have also been developed and offered to members of Wofoo Leaders' Network ($N = 312$) and as a part of the service learning scholarship program at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University as well ($N = 72$). In 2015, a condensed program on service leadership was offered to students joining the Silk Road Youth Leadership Program jointly organized by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Peking University and Xian Jiaotong University ($N=50$).

In summary, since the inception of the Fung Service Leadership Initiative at PolyU, a total of 1,040 students were nurtured to become service leaders through participation in credit-bearing subjects and non-credit-bearing programs.

Research activities

Primarily, evaluation research is central to the development of Service Leadership education at PolyU. Multiple evaluation strategies have been used to evaluate the credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing service leadership training programs. Quantitative (i.e., objective outcome evaluation, subjective outcome evaluation, and process evaluation) and qualitative (i.e., focus group interview and personal reflection) methodologies were employed. Taken as a whole, evaluation findings provide evidence that students were highly satisfied with the service leadership subjects and training programs. Most importantly, the subject and programs enabled students to gain service leadership attributes and yielded positive impacts on their development. To date, 12 refereed journal articles have been published or accepted for publication based on the evaluation studies (1-8).

In addition to evaluation research, the PolyU team has embarked on several research initiatives in terms of scale development. First, a scale assessing service leadership knowledge and qualities has been developed to gauge students' changes after taking service leadership subjects. Second, a research project on the relevance of Confucian virtues to service leadership was carried out. A Chinese Character Strengths Scale has been developed to assess students' Confucian virtues. Data have been collected from 2,887 students and journal articles will be published based on the findings. Third, The Service Leadership Scale research project was launched in July 2015 which aims to develop a multidimensional measure to assess the qualities of service leaders as outlined by the service leadership model, and to validate the developed instrument. Specifically, three scales (Knowledge, Behavior/Skills and Attitudes/Beliefs/Values Scales on Service Leadership) will be developed.

In order to allow scholars, practitioners, and the public to better understand service leadership, the PolyU team has presented papers at international conferences and published journal articles and a book. In terms of conferences, three papers on the key concepts and curriculum materials were presented at the Third International Congress on Pediatric Chronic Diseases, Disability and Human Development held on December 2-5, 2012 in Jerusalem, Israel. Moreover, a Service Leadership Roundtable was held on March 22, 2013, at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong. In that roundtable, our research team gave multiple presentations about service leadership education and curriculum development at PolyU. Two papers were presented at the International Conference on Service Leadership Education for University Students: Experience

in Hong Kong held on May 14-15, 2014 at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. In the first paper, credit-bearing subjects and non-credit-bearing programs were described. In the second paper, evaluation studies were presented.

In terms of publication, two special issues of the *International Journal on Disability and Human Development* documenting evaluation studies' findings, the curriculum of the Service Leadership model, including the distinction between manufacturing and service economies and comparison between the Service Leadership model and existing major leadership models in the scientific literature have been published (9-18). Furthermore, Chinese articles have also been published in the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs discussing the importance of service leadership for Hong Kong's competitiveness and how to nurture service leaders among Hong Kong students. Lastly, a book entitled "Promoting Service Leadership Qualities in University Students: The Case of Hong Kong" was published in summer 2015 with Prof. Daniel Shek and Dr. Po Chung as Editors, and Dr. Hildie Leung and Dr. Li Lin as the Managing Editors. The book includes keynote speeches, welcoming addresses, and papers presented at the International Conference of Service Leadership Education: Experience in Hong Kong in May 2014 (19-22). In summary, a total of 51 publications were produced by the PolyU team.

Reflections and learning points

There are several learning points from the project. Primarily, the development of the service Leadership curriculum (including credit-bearing subjects and non-credit-bearing programs) forms a solid basis for Service Leadership education in Hong Kong. The related curriculum materials, assessment methods, and publications are important for the long-term sustainability of the initiative in the higher education sector. One obvious obstacle for Service Leadership education in Hong Kong is the lack of curriculum materials and subjects. As such, development of the four subjects and the non-credit-bearing subjects at PolyU is helpful to take the Service Leadership education subjects forward.

Second, the project shows that experiential learning is a desirable learning approach in Service Leadership education. There were several features of Service Leadership subjects and programs developed at PolyU. Primarily, besides short lectures, interactive learning activities including role play and structured activities were used. In addition, collaborative learning through discussion, sharing, and presentation in groups was emphasized. Furthermore, students were encouraged to have reflective learning throughout the subject or program. Essentially, the students were encouraged to have reflections about their knowledge, attitudes and behavior with reference to the Service Leadership model.

Third, our experience suggests that Service-Learning is a good pedagogy for Service Leadership education. Through service-learning, students can have opportunities to reflect on their knowledge, attitudes and skills about Service Leadership, particularly moral character (such as sense of responsibility and trustworthiness) and caring dispositions (such as empathy and having passion about the needy). In essence, through the service-learning projects developed and service-learning hours performed by the students, the students can learn more about Service Leadership attributes.

Fourth, this project underscores the importance of using systematic evaluation methods to assess the impact of Service Leadership Initiative. In the present context, objective outcome evaluation adopting the one group pretest-posttest design was used. In the case of the Global Youth Leadership Program, multiple waves of data were in fact collected. Subjective outcome evaluation (i.e., the client satisfaction approach) was also adopted to gauge the views of the students. Besides,

process evaluation was used to understand the implementation quality and adherence to the developed materials. Finally, qualitative evaluation is a good way to understand the subjective views of the students who take the subject or program. It is argued that Service Leadership subjects or programs developed should be properly evaluated to understand the impacts on the students.

Fifth, we must conduct systematic research on Service Leadership model. There are still many questions to be answered with reference to the SLAM model. Some questions include: What are the unique features of the model as compared to other mainstream leadership models? What antecedents influence the development of Service Leadership qualities? What are the consequences of having Service Leadership qualities? What should be the ingredients of moral character? How can we nurture trust in service leaders? Is Service Leadership related to productivity? Obviously, more research should be done to strengthen the body of knowledge on Service Leadership.

Sixth, it is important to document research and education on Service Leadership. In particular, there is a need to build up the literature on Service Leadership. Obviously, without published work on Service Leadership, it would be difficult to develop Service Leadership education. In particular, scientific reports on the effectiveness of Service Leadership education should also be stepped up.

Finally, the Service Leadership Initiative is an excellent example of collaboration between the commercial sector and the higher education sector. For the contribution of the commercial sector, the Victor and William Fung Foundation provides the financial support and the Hong Kong Institute of Service Leadership & Management provides the Service Leadership model and curriculum framework. For the contribution of the higher education sector, different curriculum materials, subjects, and programs have been developed. In the last three years, we can use the description of “let the hundred flowers bloom” to represent the work done. In future, consolidation of the work done and adoption of a more focused approach would be important.

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