

The challenges of integrating “Leadership Identity Development” and “Global Citizenship”, adjunct to off-shore service-based projects in higher education

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1. ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

Leadership development is a process of experiential learning in a diverse context and experiences, while global citizenship is the state of improving the world through business’s engagement & partnership, addressing global societal challenges. This study employs content analysis in exploring the attributes of students’ learning with respect to leadership identity development and global citizenship by retrieving their submitted reflective journals from 2014-2018. Findings show positive learning experiences in leadership identity development together with knowledge gained, attitude and behaviour changes as global citizens. The off-shore service-based projects has created a valuable & extraordinary experience for the participating 14 student leaders learning and transforming with “leadership identity development” and “global citizen” in higher education. Challenges ahead are the off-shore service-based health related project exposed the student leaders to a context of a global service-related environment not necessarily brought along the expected learning and transformation as global citizens. There are room and space to be improved implying a more structured / semi-structured programme in governing the learning experiences.

Keywords: Leadership identity development, Global citizenship, Service-learning, Experiential learning, Challenge

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership development is a process of experiential learning in a diverse context and experiences. Meanwhile, global citizenship is the state of improving the world through business’s engagement & partnership, addressing global societal challenges (World Economic Forum, 2008), exploring the linkage between people, places & cultures. The student leadership development programme is an integrated programme aligned with the vision and strategic objectives of the School of Nursing, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). Primary objectives of the programme designated in empowering motivated students with more experiences and opportunities in global outlook, leadership development,

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inter-disciplinary and international collaboration. The programme originated in 2014, aimed at enhancing experiences of students in global citizenship and leadership development. It provides opportunities and incentive support for interested and committed students to enhance their learning experiences as part of a designated off-shore service-based health related project. This paper explores the impact of the student leadership development programme, adjunct to the off-shore service-based project. It focuses on what and how participating student leaders integrate their experiences in leadership identity development and global citizenship in higher education.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kotter (2010), leadership refers as:

“the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives”.

Leadership development is a growing trend highlighting the importance of the impacts and efficacy of promoting leadership development through service-base projects (Wurr & Hamilton, 2012). It can be seen as a process of experiential learning with structured or unstructured, formal or informal, inside or outside of the conventional learning environment. The range of pathways towards learning includes learning from failure, self-awareness, adaptability (understanding the context), continual reflective learning, etc. Meanwhile, the World Economic Forum (2008) denoted global citizenship as:

“the state of improving the world through business’s engagement & partnership whilst addressing global societal challenges”.

The nature and equality of these relationships (Oxfam, 2015) help to show concern for global well-being beyond national boundaries, based on the understanding of global well-being, and influences on national and local well-being (UNESCO, 2014). Hence, through associating with responsibilities & obligations transcending national boundaries, global citizenship can be enhanced (Lough & McBride, 2013). Therefore, developing undergraduate students in higher education accomplish better preparation of graduates with leadership identity and global outlook (Hammond, 2016). Thus, global competencies conducive to both national competitiveness and regional co-operation can be enhanced.

The student leadership development programme adjunct to off-shore service-learning (SL) projects adopts the learning process by Kolb’s *learning cycle* (McLeod, 2017). The four learning cycle accomplishes learners to enhance their ability in reflection and improvement. Participating student leaders are required to attend all related activities, support the fellow students, engage in the service-based project, report regularly to the mentors and promote the programme to others. It is expected that they can actively reflect upon coaching and demonstrate as role models as student leaders and global citizen. The successful use of this learning cycle is associated with relevant responsibilities and obligation transcending in an international environment (Lough & McBride, 2013). Hence, they can gain insights into their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which significantly shape their leadership identity. The student leadership

development programme pursues new areas to (a) inspire student leaders to emphasise on increased awareness; and (b) understand problems that arise from the project. Thus, they can learn to handle these issues with respect to “leadership identity” and “empowerment” to be global citizens. Hopefully, they can apply, integrate and sustain these attributes as part of their lifelong learning.

The conceptual frameworks adopted are Leadership Identity Development Model (Komives et al., 2009) and A-B-C dimensions of global citizenship (Harlap, 2008; Oxfam, 2015; UNESCO, 2015). The Leadership Identity Development Model has six stages: a) Awareness: recognizing that leadership is happening around; b) Exploration / engagement: intentional involvements in groups and meaningful experiences, taking on responsibilities; c) Leader identified: trying on new roles and responsibilities, managing others; d) Leadership differentiated: awareness that leadership can be non-positional—that leadership is a group process; e) Generativity: accepting the responsibility for the development of others and for sustaining organizations, and f) Integration / synthesis: continued self-development and lifelong learning; striving for congruence and internal confidence.

For global citizenship, the experiences is categorized as A-B-C: “A” is the affective domain, including being respectful of diversity, with ethical responsibility, cultural understanding, empathy towards others, concern for the environment, being open-minded and with commitment to action. “B” is the behavioural domain, referring to being able to act effectively and responsibly at local, national and global community, strive for a more peaceful and sustainable world; and “C” is cognition, implying the use of knowledge and understanding, critical thinking, reflective thinking and strategic thinking.

3. METHODS / ANALYSIS

Design and participants

This is an exploratory qualitative study employing content analysis to review students’ reflective journals on what and how they learnt, using the perspective of leadership identity and global citizenship. It was adjunct to an off-shore Service-Learning (SL) projects in Cambodia by the School of Nursing from 2014-2018. Convenience sampling was adopted where participants are interested students who had applied and selected of the following criteria: completed a credit-bearing SL subject of PolyU scored B+ or above (engagement); GPA at 3 or above (academically satisfactory), demonstrated commitment to peer mentoring (willingness), submitted a proposal for an off-shore service-based health-related project (with an idea). A total of 14 high geared students participated in the study, namely student leaders, who were dedicated and committed to the student leadership development programme. They all consented to submit the reflective journals and joined the study. There were three male and eleven female student leaders. Thirteen of them were from the School of Nursing, while one of them was from Department of Radiography, all within year two to year four of their studies.

Data collection

Data were collected through the submission of post-service reflective journals in

2014-2018. A guideline consisting of the open-ended questions on “What?”, “So what?” and “Now what?” were provided to the student leaders in guiding their reflections.

Data analysis

All fourteen reflective journals were analysed with content analysis by two independent reviewers reading their reflective journals line-by-line. Key phrases of students’ reflections and common content were coded and grouped into themes. Themes were abstracted and analysed according to the Leadership Identity Development and Global Citizenship models. The triangulation of data was adopted by external observers, who were available in 2014 and 2018. They submitted overall observation log / reports to supplement after the service-trip, where their reports helped to validate some of the content in the reflective journals.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Themes in the data were analysed, coded and classified into the 6 stages of the Leadership Identity Development Model. Most of the participating students indicated positive learning experiences in the leadership identity development. As anticipated, results of attributes on leadership identity development were skewed towards Stages 1 to 4, thus, a certain proportion of them reflected deeply entering to Stages 5 & 6. For global citizenship, the results showed gaining in knowledge, while others implied changes in attitude and motivated in affection and behavioural changes.

There are two sides of a coin. One outstanding student leader showed both transformation and full engagement. He came back every year joining the student leadership development programme and the “self-initiated-project” for three successive years. Regretfully, two participating students showed adverse learning experiences blinded by their personality with little preparedness in problem solving skill and reluctant to be open-mind in coaching. The challenges of the off-shore service-based health related project exposed the student leaders to a global service-related environment but not necessarily brought along the expected learning and transformation. The findings of this study imply that there are room and space to be improved. Perhaps, a more structured training kits highlighting in the topics and personalized coaching may help to better prepare and guide students to become deep learners with respect to leadership identity development and global citizenship.

5. CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY AND PRACTICE

This exploratory study helps to understand the attributes of students’ learning experiences in terms of leadership identity development and global citizenship. Creating such learning opportunity and space has inspired them to have a broader reflection on leadership identity development as well as global citizens in an off-shore service-based setting. It is a valuable & extraordinary experience for the participating student leaders learning and transforming with “leadership identity

development” and “global citizen” in higher education. However, there are always room for improvements so that the programme can be more structured and goal directed towards leadership identity development and global citizens empowerment.

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