

International Conference on “Service Leadership Education in Service Economies”

Day 1 Abstract

Service Leadership at HKBU: A new concept in General Education

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Institutions of higher learning have been instrumental in developing curriculum that is responsive to societal needs. In the case of service leadership, the Hong Kong Institute of Service Leadership and Management suggested that the Hong Kong tertiary institutions consider the possibility of developing curriculum that will be responsive to the needs of the service industry and at the same time enhance leadership capabilities of the student-learners. With the financial support from Victor and William Fung Foundation, the Hong Kong Baptist University initiated this project by designing General Education courses that addressed service leadership in a variety of disciplines and environments. We aimed at creating a number of courses so as to provide greater opportunities for the students to be exposed to the concept of service leadership. All of the service leadership courses developed aim at engaging the students to understand how service leadership is influenced by social perceptions. In these holistic, interdisciplinary courses we have incorporated content and pedagogical strategies that help students to improve their ability in recognizing the importance of trust and respect in social contexts, and how to deliver service with competence, and care. We believe that theories, research, and practices from a wide variety of academic disciplines and a wide range of scholar-practitioner experiences inform, support, and enhance service leadership curriculum and extra-curricular activities. We have achieved this goal in our courses.

From a programmatic perspective we looked at two salient means through which our university could support service leadership: (a) curricular, and (b) extracurricular. Much of the work currently done in most universities relate to the extracurricular activities such as service learning. Our emphasis has been on the curricular approaches to engage students in the community. We view service leadership as an integral part of a course that emphasizes the role of leadership in providing services to the community at large. Educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs (whether it is a business or a social organization) and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility has been the hallmark of these courses.

Developing service leadership at the institutional level required us to pay special attention to the following elements: awareness, planning, support, expansion, and evaluation. Research conducted at 44 institutions in the U.S. that participated in a three-year study of integrating service with academic studies identified four constituencies that a service learning/leadership programme should focus its attention: institution, faculty, student, and community. In the last 3 years we have effectively engaged all parties in constructing courses that will have a significant impact on the lives of our graduates for years to come. The lessons learned from this project have been numerous and included proper planning, providing workshops to faculty, and supporting the extracurricular activities that were part of these courses.

Assessments of the Service Leadership courses all point to the positive impact these courses have on the lives of our students.

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