

**International Conference on  
“Service Leadership Education in Service Economies”**

**Abstract for Day 1**

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**Service Leaders Education in The University of Hong Kong: An Experiential Learning Approach**

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The Service Leadership Internship (SLI) in The University of Hong Kong provides students in Social Sciences and Business with a chance to hone their leadership skills through authentic experiential learning. The SLI takes place in the summer as a credit bearing course since 2012 under the support of the Victor and William Fung Foundation. There were more than 400 students embarking their leadership skills under the SLI program over the years.

It is very difficult to foster students’ leadership skills in the traditional classroom environment. In view of this, the SLI students work as “shared leaders” at different community partners’ organizations to tackle real-life problems through internships. Students are continuously engaged in a process of analyses, planning, implementation and evaluation.

To provide meaningful and diverse learning opportunities for the students, we have successfully engaged different types of community partners. They include government departments, small and medium enterprises, NGOs and even family foundations. The SLI in HKU has also established a clear structure for the internship.

Firstly, the HKU approach emphasizes the integration of academic knowledge with experiential learning. To help students apply their academic knowledge during the internship, all the SLI projects are categorized into five types: 1) Clinical and Educational Services, 2) Communication, Media and Culture, 3) Corporate Social Responsibility, 4) Community or Social Services, and 5) Research and Policy Analysis.

Secondly, we develop a curriculum to nurture leadership development throughout internship by adopting a social-cognitive approach to motivation as the theoretical basis for the enhancement of self-growth and personal competencies. Emphasis is placed on changing the mindset and promoting self-efficacy and self-resilience. We start with a series of pre-internship workshops before the internship commences to nurture these important skills.

Thirdly, we provide a dual system of supervision. Each team of students is assigned with a supervisor from the community partner and an academic tutor from the university to guarantee continuous support and supervision. On-site tripartite meetings among students, supervisors and academic tutors are held regularly and booster sessions are conducted for students to share and solve problems.

Fourthly, with regard to the assessment for learning, academic deliverables are structured throughout the internship. Students are assessed by the supervisors, academic tutors, peers and themselves. Each year an evaluation study of the program impact on students’ mindsets and their gains in social awareness, personal and social competencies and leadership skills is conducted.

While we reflect on the lessons learned in the process, we also bring in new elements to scaffold students' learning, for example, using social media to engage students in the reflective process and developing new cross-disciplinary initiative beyond the borders of Hong Kong (for those who are interested, see Day Two presentation on "Glocal Solutions"). In the present presentation, we will share the impacts of the SLI program on students and the important lessons we have learnt.

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