

**International Conference on
“Service Leadership Education for University Students: Experience in Hong Kong”**

Day 1 Presentation Abstract

Changing Student Mindset by Community Involvement: The Impact of Service Leadership Internship

Shui-fong Lam and Jessie Chow

Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong

The Service Leadership Internship (SLI) in the University of Hong Kong is funded by the Li and Fung Service Leadership Initiative. It provides students in Social Sciences and Business a chance to hone their leadership skills through authentic experiential learning.

The SLI takes place in the summer as a credit bearing course spanning 6 – 8 weeks and has been offered since 2012. To help community partners in real-life problems, the students from different disciplines work as a team to generate innovative solutions. For examples, Business students provided consultation service to a small information technology company on operational problems, whereas social sciences students helped an NGO to launch a public education program.

To equip students with the basic knowledge, skills and attitudes, a series of pre-internship workshops is offered to the students. The workshops emphasize the significance of social responsibilities, personal and social competencies as shared leaders. With social-cognitive approaches in motivation, the workshops help students understand how different mindsets influence their attribution styles and resilience to setbacks. They also learn how attribution styles affect their inter-personal interactions and how they can resolve conflict collaboratively and constructively. On-going support from academic tutors is given to students through regular meetings and on-site visits during the internship.

Multiple assessment methods are used to assess students' learning outcomes. The students' performance in the SLI is evaluated by the supervisors in the community, academic tutors on campus, their peers and themselves. The students are required to submit different academic deliverables (e.g. proposal, reflective journal, integrated essay... etc.) throughout the internship period. To celebrate and share their achievement, a poster event is held a week after the internship period. To measure students' changes in their mindset and attribution styles, the students are required to complete a survey before and after the internship. The Social Sciences students who take an individual internship without the leadership component serve as the comparison group for the evaluation of the SLI.

In summer 2013, 108 students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the School of Business and Economics participated in 24 community projects through the SLI. These students reported that they had gained a lot in their awareness of social responsibility, personal and social competencies from participation in the SLI. Most importantly, compared to the students who took the individual internship (N = 82), the SLI students had significant changes of mindset. At the end of the internship, their mindsets were more growth-oriented and less fixed. It was also found that students with less fixed mindsets tended to be more

forgiving. They also tended not to attribute any transgressions of their friends as a trait. Students who endorsed trait-based attribution tended to be less forgiving. In contrast, students who attributed the transgression of their friends to many factors in the particular situation tended to be more forgiving. These results showed that the SLI had impacts on students' mindset, attribution styles, and ways to deal with interpersonal conflicts. It enhanced their sense of social responsibility, personal and social competencies.