1ST FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION
HANG SENG MANAGEMENT COLLEGE, HONG KONG
21 JULY 2015

SERVICE LEADERSHIP AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH TEAM-BASED SERVICE-LEARNING

Prof. Robin Stanley SNELL
Dr. CHAN Yin Lee, Maureen
Department of Management
Lingnan University
There is broad agreement that Universities should prepare students to become civic-minded leaders (Poff, 2010).

Service-learning has gained traction in Asia as a practical means of involving students in projects that benefit the community while applying knowledge and skills that derive from their academic studies (Xing & Ma, 2010).
Course-embedded service-learning has been offered as a choice to students at LU since 2006.

“Civic engagement” (which may include service-learning) recently became a graduation requirement at LU.

Service-learning (embedded within courses bearing 3-credits) will become a graduation requirement for all students admitted in 2016.
Over more than 10 years, the Office of Service-Learning (OSL) has built a network of around 200 community partner organizations, some overseas.

OSL organized a series of 4 biennial regional conferences and contributed to a 5th. It maintains a strong presence in Asia.

Over the last 3 summers, LU sent delegations of (each time) around a dozen faculty members, plus staff from OSL, to liberal arts universities in the USA. A much earlier delegation went to Thailand.

There has been a series of formal and informal campus-wide and faculty-based sharing sessions.

Departments across LU have been encouraged to incorporate service learning projects in some 3-credit courses.
OSL conducts ongoing censuses of students (before and after), partner organization representatives, and instructors, against various civic engagement indicators.

OSL keeps records of how many students participate, and how many courses are involved.

Students’ academic performance on their service-learning components (e.g. project reports, self-reflective essays) is assessed against course-level learning goals and contributes to their grades.

Course-teaching-and learning evaluation (CTLE) scores are computed in the normal way for individual course instructors: hence no separate competency assessment for supporting service leadership through service-learning.
CONTRIBUTION BY THE BUSINESS FACULTY

Under the **Service Leadership Initiative**, sponsored by the Victor & William Fung Foundation, two departments in the Business Faculty University (MGT and MIB) offer opportunities for students to participate in **Service Leadership through Service-Learning Projects** administered by Lingnan University’s Office of Service Learning (OSL).

These projects are co-curricular to seven credit-bearing courses: Introduction to Business, Social Marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility, Leadership and Teamwork, Services Marketing, Strategic Management, and Service Leadership.
SUMMER PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Also under the **Service Leadership Initiative**, in the summers of 2013, 2014 & 2015, a total of around 40 students (from across the University) have undertaken stand-alone, non-course embedded **service leadership practicum assignments**, mainly in NGOs or social enterprises.

- Participating students have received priming via a Service Leadership workshop.

- Over 6-8 weeks full-time, each has pursued a ‘mini-mission’ agreed with the host partner organization.

- Students have completed individual self-reflection templates at fortnightly intervals during their practicum periods.
We have carried out **qualitative formative evaluation studies** of the team-based service leadership through service-learning projects undertaken for various community partner organizations (Snell et al, 2014a/2015a, 2014b, 2015b) and are currently studying the practicum experiences (Snell et al, 2015c).

We have identified some features of the educational and inter-institutional experience that appear to **foster civic-mindedness** through **service-learning** and **service leadership**.
**Civic-mindedness**: a multifaceted developmental domain, comprising cognitive, affective, and conative elements. These include moral reasoning and decision-making, awareness of societal complexities, respect for humanity, and desire to contribute to others’ well-being and development. (Snell et al., 2015b).

**Service Leadership**: the distributed practice of people-oriented leadership for service. (Snell et al., 2014a/ 2015a).
Course-embedded service learning is well-embedded and will (fingers-crossed) be sustained financially through donations and UGC funding.

Professional capability to facilitate service leadership through service learning will be leveraged through:

- Partner organization networks and associated goodwill and know-how.
- Experienced students serving as teaching assistants.
- Accumulated research on service leadership education and service leadership practice.
- OSL has “pulled the cart” for many years. Their liaison and connecting work is probably essential.
DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

- Projects address real community needs.
- Students are oriented toward making a difference.
- Students are helped to understand needs and hardships at the grassroots.
- Stakeholders perceive the projects as incremental steps in the evolution of deeper collaboration.
- Students seek and gain affirmation through constructive analysis and action.
ALSO IMPORTANT

- Inter-institutional trust: partner organizations and the University.
- Students receive preparatory training.
- Projects are aligned with course level learning goals.
- Students are empowered to make a difference.
- Flexibility to redefine project goals if initial assumptions prove wrong.
- Constructive and ongoing feedback from service recipients.
- Students meet grassroots beneficiaries.
- Students practice distributed service leadership in teams.
ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY

Background

- 6-person team.
- A credit-bearing free-elective course on *Leadership and Teamwork*.
- In partnership with an NGO, responsible for the rehabilitation of elderly people in a particular district of Hong Kong.
- Team project involved designing and running a series of four classes for eight elderly people with chronic disabilities on using information technology to access salient content and contact information about health issues.
Group interviews.

Individual self-reflection reports.

A collective team performance review report.
Team members recognized that the project would address a genuine service need. They found that the POR was highly committed to the project and was readily accessible.

‘Our team had no problem regarding liaison… The (POR) knew our set deadlines and could usually respond on the same day or the next day to our e-mails. At critical times when we needed help from or sent urgent messages, (the POR) would reply to us very quickly.’
2. Making a Difference (Self-determination Theory)

- ‘We were provided with … information about the participants, who would come on (our) programme… including their knowledge level in terms of IT.’
- ‘We arranged for there to be a main facilitator, with one of the three local students taking up this role, leaving the other two to help the weaker learners.’
- ‘We really wanted to serve those needy people.’
- ‘We were always thinking about how to increase the quality of our class… We hope that after the course… they can really have a better life.’
3. Intimate Insight into Needs and Hardships at the ‘Grassroots’ (Intergroup Contact Theory)

‘(This was) an opportunity for me to communicate with (the elderly) and learn from them… (They) are chronically disabled patients yet they still try to learn new things; they don’t want to waste time. They are very focused in learning. We had to design the course content carefully.’

‘I developed more concern about the (elderly) participant’s needs. I took more care about the course materials, such as enlarging the font size. I would be more patient in listening to their feelings.’
‘We developed a common goal that the negative feedback from the POR would become less and less. After the second lesson, the … encouraging remarks motivated us a lot as our efforts had been recognized. We tried our best to identify means for better outcomes. I have never before had such strong feelings of satisfaction from doing a project.’

‘Our team did not do very well in the first session because we did not have a good division of labour. After that, we collected feedback from the participants, POR and [the field coordinator from Lingnan]. We put a lot of thought and effort into improving our performance.’
5. Sense of Continuity

Although this group of students did not explicitly mention the issue of continuity, it was generally understood that a successful partnership on this occasion would likely result in further opportunities for future cohorts of students to perform similar services.
‘I believe the team goals changed me a lot. We had a common goal and I wanted to achieve it. This changed my view about community service. Lots of people need our help in the community. If I have more opportunities, I will be willing to serve them in the future.’

‘Before, even if I knew that someone needed help, I might not take action to help them. I would feel that I couldn’t help much though I felt sorry for them. But now I would like to do more.’

‘This learning attitude (of the elderly) is worth promoting to society, especially to the younger generation like me. I’m considering working for NGOs to helping different groups of people in society.’

Increased Civic-mindedness
VISION: BUILDING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable quality of life in the community

Students develop as civic-minded, non-hierarchical leaders

Systematic need diagnosis and service proposition development

Experiential learning

Critical reflection

Respecting the needs, rights, and dignity of people who are different, and recognizing the value that each person one comes into contact with can bring
Purpose, Values, Method, Research, Dialogue, Partnership

Linkage to Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)
PRINCIPLE 1: PURPOSE

“We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.”

Service leadership through service-learning projects induce students to reach-out to members of society who are disadvantaged and/or different, thus fostering an inclusive mindset.

Consulting for social enterprises, whose economic mission is to become self-sufficient, supports the idea of sustainability.
PRINCIPLE 2: VALUES

“We will incorporate into our academic activities and curricula the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.”

Involvement in service leadership through service-learning projects with local organizations is complementary to the spirit of the UN Global Compact that encourages corporations to respect local communities.
PRINCIPLE 3: METHOD

- “We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.”

- Arranging involvement in service leadership through service-learning projects with local organizations is fully consistent with this principle.
PRINCIPLE 4: RESEARCH

“We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.”

Our case study suggests that students undertaking service leadership through service-learning projects can participate in an extended value chain that enhances the value of commercial products such as the I-Pad vis-à-vis disadvantaged groups in society.
“We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.”

Students undertaking service leadership through service-learning projects engage with the challenges of meeting the social mission of social enterprises (and are supported by their instructor).
“We will facilitate and support dialogue and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organizations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.”

Students undertaking service leadership through service-learning projects tend to focus on understanding the needs of, and serving, particular groups of local service recipients. Again this is complementary to the spirit of the UN Global Compact that encourages corporations to respect local communities.
REFERENCES


THE END
Q & A
& COMMENTS
& THANK YOU!