Community Leaders of Tomorrow (CLT) Program

A Service Leadership Mentoring Scheme to Enhance “Other Learning Experiences” in Secondary Schools

Dr Lai Kwok Hung
Senior Student Affairs Officer and Adjunct Assistant Professor
Ms Wong Wing Sze
Student Affairs Officer

The Hong Kong Institute of Education
Outline of Presentation

- Describe how Community Leaders of Tomorrow (CLT) Program was launched
- Learning experiences of secondary school students after implementing their own community service projects
- Roles of CLT mentors in supporting these project teams and how service leadership capabilities were developed
- Suggestions for future development
Background of Community Leaders of Tomorrow (CLT) Program

The Program was first launched in 2006–07 by EdExchange, a non-profit organization specializing in helping schools raise educational resources from the community, and the Student Affairs Office of HKIEd, aiming at developing future leaders of Hong Kong and China with a strong sense of social responsibility.

Participating schools were invited to nominate student teams, comprising of Secondary School Form 3 (or Year 9 for international schools) students or above, to conceive, plan and implement community service projects.
Background of Community Leaders of Tomorrow (CLT) Program

The Program was organized throughout a full school year (Oct to May) and approved projects were assessed by a panel of judges for creativity, entrepreneurship, effectiveness and reach, financial responsibility, and teamwork. Outstanding projects were recognized with awards.

Over the past few years, about 4,000 students from 100 schools participated in the Program. Project themes included serving the elderly, promoting environmental education, teaching English in rural schools in PRC, fund raising, etc.
Background of Community Leaders of Tomorrow (CLT) Program

Starting from 2009–10, The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) took over the Program and mobilized a group of CLT mentors to guide student teams of participating secondary schools in the planning and implementation of community service projects.
The CLT mentors also organized an experience sharing and awards presentation ceremony and a leadership enhancement workshop for students nominated by participating schools at the end of a school year. It is hoped that these mentors can:

- equip with knowledge as well as practical skills in OLE activities;
- develop organization and leadership skills through initiating and implementing OLE activities;
- learn how to implement service-learning as a core component of education in the school perspective.
In 2010–11, the Student Affairs Office of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), had been sponsored by the Yue Yuen Industrial (Holdings) Limited and the Education Bureau, with the support of EdExchange volunteers, continued to implement CLT Program. Altogether, 31 applications were received from 34 schools. The best 26 proposals were selected.

32 HKIEd students were recruited as CLT mentors to lead 6 out of the total 26 student teams to implement community service projects and monitor their progress.
During the mentoring process, mentors provided guidance and support to student in writing proposal, organized communication skills training, and advised in program planning and evaluation.

Training on volunteer orientation, volunteer management, leadership and communication skills in service provision, skills on programme design and proposal writing, coaching and debriefing skills and knowledge on Other Learning Experiences (OLE) in New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum were organized for the CLT mentors.
# Program Schedule

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Early Sep 10</td>
<td>Program was <strong>promoted</strong> to all secondary and international schools via the Education Bureau.</td>
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<td>Sep–Oct 10</td>
<td>Students <strong>formed project teams</strong> with the nomination from their respective schools and submitted proposals to the CLT Organizing Committee. Teams that expected mentor’s involvement were selected.</td>
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<td><strong>Training</strong> activities were organized for CLT mentors.</td>
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<td>Oct 10</td>
<td>CLT mentors conducted <strong>school visits</strong> to have first initial contacts with student teams and teachers from 6 participating schools to involve in planning of the service projects. Meetings with student teams were organized to assist in proposal writing.</td>
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<td>Nov 11</td>
<td>CLT Organizing Committee <strong>reviewed</strong> and <strong>approved</strong> the proposals.</td>
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<td>Comments from CLT Organizing Committee were conveyed to the school teams for proposal revision.</td>
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<td>Dec 10–Apr 11</td>
<td>● Student teams <strong>implemented</strong> their projects.</td>
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<td>Jan 11</td>
<td>● Meeting with CLT mentors to <strong>reveal</strong> the <strong>progress</strong> of the service projects.</td>
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<td>Apr 11</td>
<td>● <strong>Evaluation meetings</strong> were arranged for school teams and CLT mentors.</td>
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<td>● School teams submitted project <strong>reports</strong> to CLT Organizing Committee.</td>
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<td>Early May 11</td>
<td>● Project teams <strong>presented</strong> their works to the CLT panel.</td>
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<td>End May 11</td>
<td>● Experience Sharing and Awards Presentation <strong>Ceremony</strong> cum Leadership Enhancement <strong>Workshop</strong> was organized for students of school teams and CLT mentors.</td>
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Data Collection and Analysis
Data Collection and Analysis

- Focus interviews with CLT mentors in middle and final stage of the project implementation.

- Focus interviews with 6 teams of secondary school students and teachers are conducted at the end of the project implementation.

- A set of evaluation guidelines is designed to facilitate students’ and mentors’ reflection.
Data Collection and Analysis

♦ For the evaluation with secondary school students, the focus is on the reflection on their learning, changes in self-capability, and suggestions for further improvement in the service implementation and the effectiveness of the mentoring process.

♦ For the mentors, the assessment is focused on the effectiveness of their mentoring work and their learning throughout the process.

♦ Views of selection panel members from the Education Bureau, HKIEd and EdExchange volunteers are also considered.
Learning Experiences of Secondary School Students
Communication Skill

Communication skill was enhanced through the cooperation with teammates, mentors, liaison with service agency and the interaction with the service recipients.

They learned to express their opinions actively and were taught with specific communication skills towards different service recipients like mentally and visually disabled.

- Student A: “At first, I really feel difficult to communicate with the mentally disabled, then I realize that the key is: patience. We need to be patient to hear and speak slowly.”

- Student B: “I learn that being a teacher, I need to draw the attention from the elderly first before I start the lesson.”
Collaboration Skill

Students found that collaboration was the key to success to work in a team. They learned that division of labor could improve efficiency.

They also learned the importance of team building as once they had closer relationship, all teammates were willing to share their opinions and help each other.

- Student C: “I am happy to listen to the innovative ideas from the teammates. As a leader, I am not just leading them, I am also learning from them.”
Organizing and Problem Solving Skills

For most of the students, it was a brand new experience to implement a service project on their own. They felt confused for what and how to plan the projects at the beginning.

With this experience, they had developed ideas on service planning and implementation with the consideration of the project objectives and content, needs of service recipients, manpower and cost etc.

- Student D: “I learn to be detail-minded and be careful in programme planning.”

- Student E: “It is important to be flexible and adjustable as many unexpected situations occur during service implementation.”
Apart from the team leader, some students also served as the programme leader to lead other students to participate in the service programme.

At the beginning, they found it was difficult and embarrassed to motivate their classmates to work in the team. However, with the support of teachers and mentors, they learned to be more assertive, decisive and confident in leading others.

- Student F: “As a team leader, I learn that it is important to give clear instruction and guidance to my teammates and provide them with encouragement.”
Self Confidence

Student revealed that they had more confidence in expressing opinions, organizing activities and coping with pressure.

They were willing to organize service projects in future and had built up the confidence that they could do better.

- Student G: “After being the teacher for the elderly, I have more confidence in public speaking now.”

- Student H: This is the first time for me to plan and implement the programme, I can do better next time”
Most of the students expressed that they would continue to serve the community in future as they found it was a meaningful and fruitful learning to them.

They were more aware of the public facilities in the community that were provided to enhance movement of the disabled.

They were happy to change some misconceptions on the service recipient.

- Student I: “Before I meet the blind people, I think they must be very sad and pessimistic. However their happiness, positive thinking and self management ability impressed me. I learn a lot from them.”
Significance of CLT Mentors on Student Teams

Throughout the service implementation, the role of mentors was highly appreciated by the students.

Mentors’ guidance was most important in the early stage of service planning as they provided the student teams with the direction to design the project.

They felt being trusted as mentors through providing support and autonomy to them to try on their own.
Significance of CLT Mentors on Student Teams

- They also appreciated that mentors could share their experiences and provide training in communication skills with service recipients, liaison skills with different parties and leading skills in activities.

- Most importantly, mentors could serve as role models of effective leaders. Students were inspired by the confidence, passion, patience, carefulness and caring attitude from the mentors, which they believed that those were the important attributes of being a good leader.
Significance of CLT Mentors on Student Teams

- Student J: “When they are here, I feel secure and have more confidence. They must back us up.”

- Student K: “They give us lots of pressures. But those pressures are the drive for us to meet the deadline and do better.”

- Student L: “I learn from the mentors that we must have understanding on others’ constraint and provide support if needed. That’s what they have done to us.”
Learning Experiences of CLT Mentors

Most mentors expressed that they did not only guide students in the service projects, they also had self-improvement in organizing ability and generic skills.
**Effective Communication and Interaction Skills**

Mentors were trained to be more patient, confident and assertive in communication through:

- Intensive communication with the students to clarify the objectives of the programme and set goals with them;

- Continuous support and guidance to cater for the needs of students and assisted the student to fulfill the expectation of the service agencies and schools;

- Continuous communication with teachers to let them know the progress of the students and the project, in order to gain the trust from teachers.
Problem Solving Skill and Critical Thinking

Mentors had increased problem solving skill as they needed to deal with different issues aroused in the process of service implementation like team conflicts, students’ low motivation and frustration, ad-hoc problems aroused during service activities.

They needed to find out the solution and guide students to solve the problems immediately. They revealed that those problems not only trained up their problem solving skills, but also stimulated them to think faster and critically.
Some mentors felt confused at the early stage of mentoring for their degree of intervention. On one hand, they were afraid that students were not capable in organizing the service project on their own smoothly; on the other hand, they wanted to provide more opportunities for students to try and learn.

Those continuous reflection stimulated them to understand that there was no clear definition on the best intervention to students. As the mentors, they should explore the uniqueness of the students and assign the work according to their talents and abilities.

Mentor A: “Don’t underestimate students’ ability! They can amaze us! We must give the youth more opportunities to try, even to fail.”
Collaboration

Although, all mentors had fruitful experience in organizing service activities, they learned how to actively listen to teammates’ opinions and compromise with them.

They also learned to understand the difficulties teammates had encountered and provided the help and support if needed.

In the collaboration, they could learn from each other on the importance of passion and devotion in leading students, communication skill towards different parties, game leading skill etc.
Leadership

As the mentors of student teams, they revealed that their leadership ability was improved.

They believed that the improved communication skill, problem solving skill, critical thinking and collaboration were all essential attributes of a good leader.
Leadership

They had more confidence in leading students to monitor their progress closely and complete the task.

Most importantly, they had more understanding on the role of leader to provide guidance, to support, to motivate, to trust and let go, to be firm, in order to enhance team members’ growth.

- Mentor B: “I believe that students have motivation to learn and change, what we need to do is giving them a supportive push.”

- Mentor C: “We should have more trust on students, all we need to do are providing continuous support to them.”
Students from secondary schools expressed gains in communication, collaboration, organizing and problem solving skills, acquired leadership abilities, developed self confidence and social awareness after implementing their community service projects.

They also appreciated the contributions of CLT mentors through support and guidance, experience sharing, and serving as role models, especially during early stage of service planning.
CLT mentors also gained fruitful learning experiences through improvement in organizing ability and generic skills, especially in communication and interaction, problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership capabilities.
Suggestions for Future Work
1. Mentors can take more initiative to maintain closer communication with teachers for progress updating and experience sharing, most importantly, for trust building.

2. Mentors can take up more defined role within the team to provide more intensive student support.

3. Teachers can give more trust and freedom to students for them to take up the leading role according to students’ ability.

4. More training on leadership and collaboration can be provided to student teams.
THANK YOU