

Research on Contemporary China's Voluntary Service

Editors in chief: TAN Jianguang & YANG Xu



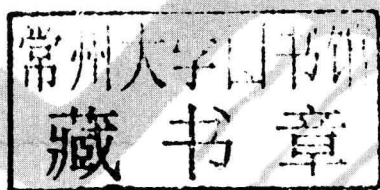
当代中国志愿服务研究

谭建光 杨 旭◎主编

中山大学出版社

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Preface

Volunteer service is the service that people dedicate time and effort to provide to propel social progress and human happiness without asking for material rewards. From loving and helping in traditional China to giving and doing charity in the modern world, they all elaborate how people still have passion to care about others and serve the society besides pursuing benefits. The trend in modern China brought by reform and opening-up, causes the people to learn and use foreign experiences including referencing and learning experience not only in developing market economy, but also in developing modern public welfare establishments. From the first volunteer hotline in Guangzhou in 1987, to the first community volunteer institution in Tianjin in 1989, to the first registered volunteer group in Shenzhen in 1990, the following of experience from western countries, Hong Kong and Macau in volunteer service marked the start of a heated trend in China to develop volunteer service which is “Dedicated, Loving, Helpful and Progressing”. Up to now, there are over 60 million volunteers in China, providing over 500 million hours of service, making remarkable contribution in fields like helping the elderly and disabled, helping the poor and unfortunate, community development, civil promotion, emergency rescue, environmental protection, large-scale activities and international cooperation.

The professional group led by Professor Jianguang Tan from Guangdong Youth Vocational College has focused on researching volunteer service and ways to promote and propel it since 1995. They conducted in-depth representative case studies in the Pearl River Delta, including cities like Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhongshan. They also went to cities like Beijing, Xi'an, Chengdu, Hangzhou and Xiamen to do nation-wide comparative research. They provided research reports for National Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Central Committee of the Communist Young League, also for the United Nations Development Program and the United Nations Volunteers. We did not just organize groups to track research, but also invite professional scholars from all over China to cooperate and research, especially on aspects like youth volunteer service, community volunteer service, volunteer service of Beijing Olympic Games, volunteer service of Guangzhou Asian Games, volunteer service in Wenchuan distress area, non-

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governmental volunteer service and professional volunteer service. We have published more than 20 books, such as *Chinese Volunteer Service: From Community to Society*, *Research on Volunteer Service in China*, *Report of the Development of Volunteer Service in Rural China*, which include hundreds of essays and research reports. Today, the research center of volunteer service in our school has become a major base to study and promote Chinese volunteer service research, attracting cooperation from many domestic and international institutions.

This time, we select 15 important reports from our collaborative research works, translate them into an English version of *Research on the Volunteer Service in Contemporary China* and publish it in the hope of showing the result of the research on volunteer service theory in China and attracting more foreign experts to notice and support this research project.

Guangdong Youth Vocational College has the function of educating the students, conferring degrees, providing social training, conducting theory research and inheriting innovative culture. In the field of volunteer service, four aspects of services are covered: training social work experts who major in the management of volunteer service for communities and rural areas, conducting research on the growth in volunteers and the development of volunteer organizations, constructing “China Volunteer Service Idea Bank” and “China Social Worker and Volunteer Collaborated Incubator Base”, developing international exchange and cooperation of volunteer service, making contribution for the development of volunteer in China and even in the world.

On the occasion of the publication of this book, I hereby congratulate the scholars and researchers on having their work known to the world, and I expect expert scholars from all over the world to pay attention to volunteer service in China, and to cooperate to build a harmonious and beautiful society.

Enjoy the book!

HU Ronghua
May, 2012

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An Analysis of the Social Volunteer Service System in China

By TAN Jianguang & ZHU Liling
(Translated by ZHU Liling)

Since China's reform and opening up, the country has been promoting the innovation of social service, as well as developing the socialist market economy. One of the important innovations is that it introduced the contemporary volunteerism from foreign countries and enriched the ways of "Learn from Leifeng to Do Good Deeds", which has gradually established the contemporary volunteerism in China. Since its origination in Guangzhou, Tianjin and Shenzhen, volunteer service in China has undergone twenty years of development, and has experienced the stage of "*exploring the system of voluntary public services, building the system of voluntary public services and improving the system of voluntary public services*". From the perspective of international experiences, it is known that contemporary volunteerism has also grown from civil spontaneous activities to social organizational promotion, from scattered services to the culture of philanthropy, from individual services to forming social support network, thus gradually developing into a system of social volunteer service with western culture characteristics. China, influenced by oriental social culture and based on socialist citizen ethics, still needs theoretic exploration and practical innovation in the way of building a characteristic system of social volunteer service.

1. Analysis of elements of social volunteer service system in China

The system of social volunteer service is combined with elements like spiritual culture, organizational mechanism, behavioral patterns and social support. Learning from experiences around the world, there appear different

kinds of volunteer services, including services individually supported by the government, by the law, by social organizations, by communities, by enterprises and by religions. We should learn from the experiences of other countries in the process of building our own social volunteer service system. However, according to China's characteristics and reality, we couldn't transplant them comprehensively. We need to design our own system on the basis of "demand" and "feasibility". According to the investigations, the important elements of social volunteer service system in China include volunteerism, volunteers, voluntary behaviors, voluntary organizations and volunteer resources.

1.1 Volunteerism—the basis of the system of core values

People with different ideological and ethical backgrounds may have different understandings towards volunteerism. First, it means devoting oneself to serving the society. Second, it is a way of serving the society without asking for any reward. Third, it can enrich oneself while helping others. Fourth, it can earn people rewards (not merely economic ones) while serving the society. Analyzing the basis of volunteerism in detail, we may find differences between eastern and western societies. In European and American countries, the growth of volunteerism is deeply influenced by Christianity, which facilitates the popularization of love and benevolence and the great efforts to care for and help other people. In eastern countries, the spirit of love and compassion is also mentioned in Confucian doctrines and Buddhism. Showing concerns and helping each other are emphasized in the traditional ethics. However, in eastern society, people stress the practice of love and mutual help among acquaintances, such as neighbors or friends, rather than concern and help for strangers. With the development of socialist market economy, rural urbanization has stimulated the spread of "a society of strangers". The change from "people of organization" to "people of community" has created an increase in dependence among social organizations. To build a common core ethics system under new social conditions has become the basis of people's survival and development. Volunteerism is irrespective of race, complexion and degree of intimacy. As long as they are individuals, they need care and help. As long as they live, they need care and help. Therefore, volunteerism can be one of the most important components in the current system of socialist core values. Meanwhile, the system's development also lays a more solid ethic foundation on volunteerism.

1.2 Voluntary behaviors—the practice of social innovation

Behavior is an important element in the system of social volunteer service.

Behavior includes volunteer service, voluntary activities, volunteer publicity, etc. It is the behavior of benevolence and mutual help that compose the basis of contemporary volunteerism, while the latter underlies social innovative development. Under the current conditions in China, “the basic ways of building a harmonious society are to promote people-oriented social policies, to continuously solve the occurred problems and to promote social innovation in the process of development.” (qtd. Ding Yuanzhu, 23) There are three characteristics while concerning voluntary behaviors. First, they are for the service recipients’ demands and put their needs first. Without necessary career requirements, volunteers often launch services on their own initiative after finding the demands related to social construction and vulnerable groups. Second, they take a lead in exploration and practice. Volunteer service is often related to the fields which the governmental service and market service can’t cover. Thanks to the volunteers, the activities can meet the service recipients’ demands. Third, they are small but influential. Voluntary behaviors come from citizens and become the minor components of people’s life. Thus, the behavioral innovations do not have too great impact on the society and they are easily accepted. However, some important behavior modes and concepts arising from these voluntary services are worthy of popularization. Gradually, they are spread to other social fields, which have huge influence on the whole society. Learning from the experience at home and abroad, volunteer service has become the experimental field of social innovation. In the current period of social transition, China is in need of innovation in all fields so as to gradually progress social development. The subtle influence of voluntary behaviors is of great importance in promoting social transition.

1.3 Volunteers—the recognition of civic roles

Volunteers are the subjects in voluntary service. Their participation embodies the civilized fashion, and also promotes the individuals’ citizen quality. Above all, it helps people identify their civic roles and cultivate their social responsibility and spirit of enterprise. In the traditional society, people took family, clan, tribe and genetic relationship as identification. They helped each other and shared responsibility among this field. In the modern society, due to migration and flow, it is difficult for them to find the traditional identification in the strange community and changeable relationships. Under this circumstance, voluntary service, which is beyond career demands and interest, becomes an effective way for the public to reflect their value and identify their citizenship.

Table I What Do You Think of the People Participating in Voluntary Groups?

Items	N	%
All of them are kind.	343	31.6
Most of them are kind, but still some are unkind.	537	49.5
They are complicated.	149	13.7
Most of them are unkind.	12	1.1
None of them is kind.	3	0.3
Not clear	40	3.7
Total	1084	100

Source: the survey data from Research Center of Guangdong Youth Volunteers Association in 2005

From the survey data, we find that most volunteers are regarded as kind people. Under the impact of market economy, people struggle more for their own interest, which increases distrust and disrespect. Meanwhile, the cohesion in civil society is damaged. The volunteers, who devote themselves to the society without asking for fame and interest, help the people in need and improve the citizens' unity and cooperation, thus set an example for modern citizens.

1.4 Voluntary organizations—the way of democratic participation

Voluntary organizations not only meet the demands of serving the society, but also help volunteers to learn social participation and democratic politics. People from communities, villages and schools usually form societies in order to have better communication and create more influence. However, the common societies, which are based on interest and freedom, can not have sustainable development motivations. By interfering in philanthropy and launching voluntary activities, the societies are endued with new energy.

Table II What Is Your Purpose of Taking Part in the Social Groups?
(Limited to two options: N =2534)

Items	N	%
Practicing abilities	1654	65.3
Developing interest and hobbies	1095	43.2
Gaining awards	137	5.4

(continued)

Items	N	%
Making friends	665	26.2
Realizing my own value	1063	41.9
Others	53	2.1

Source: the survey data from Volunteerism Research Committee of Guangdong Sociology Association in 2007

From the survey data, we find that the basic motivations for the volunteers' participation in social organizations are practicing abilities and developing interest. Then the volunteers gradually combine their demand with service for the society and the people in need. From the perspective of the world, grass-root organizations are valuable partners for the government agencies and commercial enterprises. They build up important relations between local communities and community development agencies, because both sides trust them. (qtd. ActionAid China Office, 46) By establishing voluntary groups, the social organizations in foreign countries gain trust and support from the society. Meanwhile, these organizations offer opportunities of participation and practice to the citizens. Then they gradually improve their own democratic abilities through voluntary services. Currently, the youth voluntary organizations, the community voluntary organizations and the grass-roots voluntary organizations in China also focus on their members' growth through participation. By democratic participation, volunteers' leadership is cultivated and volunteers may become the power of facilitating social democracy and progress.

1.5 Volunteer resources—the strength of a harmonious society

In the process of China's social transition, volunteerism has become another effective way of gathering social resources apart from rights and marketing. The citizens are willing to participate in voluntary service, through which they can gain a sense of pride. The social organizations are ready to launch voluntary activities, and this is an effective way to display their service image. The enterprises are active in supporting and subsidizing voluntary work, which is a good approach to take social responsibility. The Party and the government coordinate and promote volunteerism, which is a beneficial exploration of social innovation and the best way to build a "people-oriented" society. With the construction of a harmonious society, more and more social resources are accumulated in voluntary work, including human resources, fund resources,

natural resources, publicity resources, humane resources, etc. Conversely, the greater strength gathered in volunteerism will have an increasingly important influence on social development. Thus, the farsighted leaders of the Party and the government, the leaders of the social organizations and leaders from all walks of life all attach great importance to the energy of voluntary organizations. They cultivate voluntary groups and make use of them, thus getting support from all kinds of social resources.

In the construction of China's social volunteer service system, volunteerism, voluntary behaviors, volunteers, voluntary organizations and volunteer resources are the basic elements, which are essential to ensure the sustainable development of volunteer service. The Party and the government should encourage and support the cultivation of social forces and thus form the above elements, so as to create favorable conditions for the volunteerism development and lay an important foundation on the construction of a harmonious society.

2. Regional comparison of social volunteer service system in China

Since China carried out its policy of reform and opening up, the provinces and cities have gradually attached importance to the function of volunteer service, along with developing market economy and promoting social transition. They have learnt from international experiences and built the social volunteer service system. In particular, Beijing City, Shanghai City, Zhejiang Province, Sichuan Province and Liaoning Province have all formed their own characteristic mode through exploration and innovation.

2.1 Mode of administrative promotion—Beijing

In 1980s and 1990s, Beijing mainly coordinated with the Communist Youth League Central Committee (CYLCC) to launch youth volunteer service and with the Ministry of Civil Affair to launch community volunteer service. With the World Conference on Women and activities of International Volunteers' Year (IVY) held in 2001, volunteers from grass-roots voluntary organizations and volunteer groups from Beijing liaison offices of overseas agencies became active in volunteering. However, before the defined policies and measures were implemented by the Municipal Party and the government, volunteerism development in Beijing was still behind the advanced areas. In 2005, in order to meet the demand of holding Beijing Olympic Games, the Municipal Party and the government attached great importance to volunteerism development. They

established "Volunteer Work Coordination Group". The municipal leader acted as Director and strengths were combined from ministries, committees, offices and bureaus. Recently, the Standing Committee of the Municipal Party has discussed issues on volunteerism development for many times. Leaders of the Municipal Party and the government attended many voluntary activities and delivered important speeches, which made influence both at home and abroad, as well as stirred the citizens' enthusiasm for volunteering. On June 5th and 6th, 2005, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG), Beijing Volunteer Work Coordination Group and other organizations co-held the Launching Ceremony of the Volunteer Program for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games & International Forum of Volunteer Services and Peoples' Olympic. Liu Qi, Member of Political Bureau of CPC Central Committee, Secretary of Beijing Municipal Communist Party, and Wang Qishan, Mayor of Beijing, both attended the forum. Jacques Rogue, President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and Ad de Raad, coordinator of United Nations Volunteers (UNV) were also invited to be presented. Besides, Chen Zhili, the State councilor, and Deng Pufang, President of China Disabled Persons' Federation attended the forum, too. These important people's presence and their speech enhanced the value and significance of volunteerism. In recent years, the Party and the government of Beijing at all levels have played a significant role in volunteerism development. They popularized and promoted volunteerism from the perspective of political altitude, overall social situations and international events, which realized wide public participation and rapid development in volunteering.

2. 2 Mode of civilization influence—Shanghai

Volunteerism in Shanghai has a historic tradition. In modern times, volunteers of Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) began their voluntary work in Shanghai and later attracted other social organizations to learn from them. After China's reform and opening-up and the establishment of Pudong New District, Shanghai made bold reforms on social management. Among the reforms, grass-roots organizations and religious ones were encouraged to participate in the construction of community service centers and launch volunteer activities, which indicated an innovative exploration. On the basis of absorbing traditional civilization, contemporary civilization and western civilization, volunteer service in Shanghai has achieved prosperous development by combining volunteerism with civic civilization, so as to meet the demand of cultural and ethical progress. In 1997, led by the Shanghai Socialist Spiritual Civilization Committee, Shanghai Volunteers Association was established. The association's volunteerism and

voluntary activities were accepted by more and more people, and thus became an important aspect and essential way of building a harmonious society. (qtd. Sun Huiming, 2007.) Specifically, the voluntary organizations' call for "together with the world, be a civilized Shanghainese" made during the preparation for Shanghai Expo, encouraged the citizens to volunteer and cultivate volunteerism, thus demonstrating the civilized image of modern Shanghai. Led by the Spiritual Civilization Construction Committee, volunteerism in Shanghai has been developing in a diversified and flexible way. Currently, Youth Volunteers Association has become the most active group. It has created remarkable brands by launching "Go West" volunteer programs, overseas volunteer programs and large-scale voluntary activities. President Hu Jintao received Shanghai youth volunteers during his visit to Lao People's Democratic Republic and delivered a speech, which became an important resource of inspiring youth volunteers to make devotion. Moreover, community volunteer service in Shanghai attaches importance to systematicness and meticulousity, which makes it popular among the citizens. As for the charity volunteer groups and their divisions, they are service-oriented and have received a strong social response. In all, volunteer service, civil civilization and social spirit in Shanghai promote one another and complement one another.

2.3 Mode of social cooperation—Guangdong

Guangdong is the birthplace of volunteer service in mainland China. From Guangzhou's first volunteer service hotline in 1987 to Shenzhen's first registered voluntary organization in 1990, Guangdong has found a characteristic way of volunteerism after 20 years of development. However, it has also encountered the problem of differentiation. It was in Guangdong that first emerged different concepts of volunteer service (*zhiyuanfuwu* and *yiwugongzuo* in Chinese), which later aroused imitation in other areas. In fact, both of these two concepts come from *volunteer service* in English and they have the same intonation. As a result, not only Guangzhou, Zhuhai and Zhongshan, which promote *zhiyuanfuwu*, but also Shenzhen, Nanhai and Shunde, which promote *yiwugongzuo*, all emphasize the adaptation to local conditions, and thus are popular with the public. The survey data shows that nearly half of the public know that the first volunteer service hotline in China was set up in Guangzhou. Besides, they are proud of that and willing to volunteer.