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Path of Student Volunteer Organizations in Agricultural Universities for Serving Rural Left-behind Children: A Case Study of Northwest A&F University

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Abstract Most volunteer organizations in universities focus their attention on urban communities and residents, but neglect rural residents. Agricultural universities have responsibilities and conditions to serve rural areas, and should bring into play their leading role. This study surveyed situations of volunteers of Northwest A&F University serving rural left-behind children, and found that there are problems including weak volunteer awareness, unstable organization members, imperfect organization construction, and lack of effect incentive mechanism. Finally, it came up four recommendations: strengthening "active service" ideological education, improving management system construction, establishing incentive mechanism, and setting up brand project, to provide feasible path for agricultural universities serving rural weak groups in a better way.

Key words Left-behind children, Volunteer education support, Long-term service

1 Introduction

University student volunteers, as groups receiving higher education, have ability and responsibility of helping and caring rural left-behind children. However, most education support activities of university student volunteers have problems of lack of mental understanding, weak organization and management, activities becoming a mere formality, and imperfect guarantee mechanism, which influences continuation of education support for rural left-behind children^[1]. From December 12, 2014 to September 2015, through interview and semi-structural questionnaire of student volunteers of Northwest A&F University, we obtained some ideas of them about volunteer activities and organization and management in serving left-behind children. We issued 300 copies of questionnaire, and finally received 293 copies, the response rate reached 97.6%. Our survey objects were distributed in four grades of university students, 10.3%, 20.5%, 30.8% and 38.4% from freshmen to seniors respectively. We also interviewed 11 left-behind children in Duzhai Village and made an in-depth understanding of their comments and expectation about student volunteer activities.

2 Development situations of university student volunteer organizations

At present, there are more than 80 student clubs in Northwest A&F University. Mature clubs include Cyrus Tang Love Club,

Sunflower Love Club, Red Phoenix Club, Young Volunteer Association, *etc.* These volunteer organizations are under the management of social association of Northwest A&F University and receive guidance of Youth League committee of Northwest A&F University. Sunflower Love Club was founded in November 2004, Young Volunteer Association was established in September 2005, Cyrus Tang Love Club was founded in December 2005, and Red Phoenix Club was founded in March 2006. With more than ten years of development, these clubs have obtained certain social influence power, a lot of members, and relatively perfect organization structure. These volunteer organizations regularly hold education support activities for left-behind children. Activity undertaking is an effective approach for university students exercising themselves and improving their practice ability. For rural left-behind children, these activities provide love and caring and open a window for them to know the outside world.

However, the volunteer service effect in recent years is not ideal. In the interview of left-behind children, we found that their comments on volunteer services are not high, and they were reluctantly in giving high comments and most comments were feelings about organizational form. For example, several children said: "those sisters and brothers are kind, they visited us several times, and brought some activities, they made some performance like dancing and singing, but they gave us little guidance because they are busy and have many telephone calls, they chat with us and they understand much". These indicate that left-behind children are eager for campus life, but they are not clear about how to learn and how to set up communication with outside world. In combination with questionnaire and interview of university student volunteers, we found that there are some problems in volunteer services.

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3 Analysis on factors influencing volunteer service effect

3.1 Lack of deep understanding of volunteer service spirit

Through this survey, we found that Northwest A&F University has undertaken student volunteer services for 11 years. Volunteers are made up of students with sense of social responsibility and love. Their activities are mainly regular education support for rural children. However, we also found that main motive of students participating in volunteer activities is not optimistic. The three main motives are as follows: (i) understanding the society, developing social interaction circle, such as "exercising and accumulating social experience", and "expanding social interaction network", accounting for 47.1% of total volunteers; (ii) contribution and self-improvement, such as "hoping to do some useful things for the society", "providing some care for left-behind children", and "realizing self-value", accounting for 33.5%; (iii) self interest, such as "favorable for job hunting in future", and "enriching the experience", accounting for 14.2% of total volunteers. Therefore, only about one third of student volunteers deeply understand significance of volunteer services, while most volunteers have certain material gain for participating in volunteer services.

In the survey of objective of education support, 87.3% students said that the education support is to "enrich extra curricular life of left-behind children", and the criterion for inspecting education support service effect is "improvement of study of left-behind children". Therefore, it is wrong to equate the volunteer service with recreation with children and simply homework guidance, and neglect deep significance of volunteer service. Caring about future development of left-behind children is to open the mind of left-behind children, help them to grow better, guide them to pursue the true, the good and the beautiful, love life, care about others and the society. Therefore, lack of deep understanding of volunteer spirit will be difficult to realize the objective of volunteer service.

3.2 Unstable members of university volunteer organizations

Left-behind children are often brought up by their grandparents and lack accompanying of parents, continuing services of student volunteers can give them warm^[2]. Accompanying is very important and needs long-term input. However, our survey indicates that service time of volunteers are very short and the times are limited, 36.4% volunteers provide 1–2 times, 31.2% volunteers provide 3–5 times, and only 28.3% volunteers can insist more than 5 times. It can be seen that most volunteer students only tried several times. Besides, our survey also indicates that only few students stay in the clubs, many members actively withdrew from volunteer clubs in volunteer activities. For example, when Cyrus Tang Love Club recruited new members in 2013, 57 students joined in. but by 2015, 30 students in these 57 members exited, 21 members did not exit from the club but had never participated in any club activity. Such situation leads to volunteer organizations constantly change their blood. On the one hand, it leads to high

mobility of volunteer organization members and influences organization development; on the other hand, unstable members influence effect of volunteer services. In the survey, we found left-behind children feel uncomfortable. Especially in education support, left-behind children just get familiar with teaching method of volunteer A and establish trust and friendship with him, volunteer B replaces volunteer A, children have to adapt to new teaching method. What's worse, different volunteers have different behavior style, which will deteriorate uncomfortable feeling of service objects. Thus, high flow of volunteer organization members greatly obstructs long-term operation.

3.3 Imperfect organization construction University student volunteer organizations take the leader position in volunteer activities. They plan and organize activities, contact service objects, find out service demands, and control the progress of entire activities. In general, leading capacity and organization ability of volunteer organizations play an important role in effect of activities^[3]. In our survey, about 80.3% volunteers believed that volunteer organizations lack system volunteer team construction and had problem of management. There are three main reasons. Firstly, no access threshold. In other words, it is very simple and easy to join in volunteer organizations, because most such organizations have no qualification examination. As long as you are willing to join, you can join in volunteer organizations. Secondly, no constraint mechanism. Volunteers have high mobility. Most volunteers take part in one or two times of activities just for experience. Thirdly, volunteer service assessment only focuses on service frequency, but no quality inspection. Assessment of university student volunteer organizations just remains a mere formality.

Because of imperfect organization construction, some volunteer students join in volunteer organizations at will, and withdraw at will. It lacks necessary constraint mechanism. In addition, it may lead to inconsistency between activities of volunteer activities and expectation of left-behind children, many activities just remain in formality. Most services are short term or even one or two times, like education support or donation of some stationery. This is of little help for left-behind children and lacks deeper caring of left-behind children.

3.4 Lack of effective incentive mechanism At present, high mobility and low participation of student volunteers are largely because there is no effective incentive mechanism. Firstly, volunteer service activities lack innovation and attraction. In our survey of student volunteers, 86.7% students stated that volunteer activities are too monotonous and have no challenge. Such activities fail to stimulate enthusiasm of students. Secondly, volunteer organizations lack fund support. In the question "support of university for students participating in volunteer activities", 77.5% students selected "university actively advocate but provide little fund support", and 10.1% students selected "university only provides spiritual support". University student volunteer organizations rely on administrative appropriations of university and seldom raise funds from the society, shortage of funds leads to simple activities

and limited activity area and content. Thirdly, volunteer service is not incorporated into the excellence assessment system. At present, various excellence assessment programs in universities have no hard and rigid requirements for volunteer services. In addition to lack of scientific and reasonable assessment mechanism, volunteer activity does not add marks in excellence assessment, which also reduces appeal of volunteer services.

4 Recommendations for promoting sustainable development of university student volunteer services

4.1 Strengthening ideological education for university student volunteers

Development of volunteer organization can not do without volunteer members, members are just like blood of volunteer organizations; to promote sustainable development of volunteer organizations, it is required to strengthen education and training of volunteer members^[4]. "Active service" is the quintessence of volunteer service spirit and is generated on the basis of value concept. It is belief, faith and conscience, and sense of responsibility. Universities are obliged to build awareness of active service. Caring for rural left-behind children needs helping them to get out of difficulties in material aspect, and the more important is to help them to set up correct world concept, philosophy of life, and value concept. This is a long-term cause and needs sense of responsibility and spirit of utter devotion of volunteers. Related departments of universities should provide funds in propaganda and education and build spiritual garden for volunteers. For example, it is recommended to select advanced personage having volunteer spirit, to stimulate and affect organization members using the force of model, strengthen sense of mission and responsibility, and set up the idea of improving the society, promoting harmonious progress of society, and are willing to provide services and glad to contribute. Participating in volunteer activities needs sacrifice individual time and effort. Conscious, voluntary, and active services for left-behind children may really help them.

Besides, university student volunteer organizations should attach great importance to training. For left-behind children, universities can organize two trainings; one is lecture and second is special psychological consultation. Knowledge training can help volunteers improve their understanding of teaching rules, grasp some learning skills to help left-behind children, expand their knowledge scope, and more important help left-behind children to know how to study better. Special psychological consultation can be undertaken by psychological center. The psychological consultation courses should be pertinent, and teachers should grasp psychological characteristics of left-behind children, analyze service objects using lecture, video watching, assisted by diverse teaching means such as role play, and test, *etc.*

4.2 Improving management system construction for university student volunteer organizations

Excellent volunteer organizations should be arranged with perfect systems and their healthy development is inseparable from respect for systems. Therefore, relevant departments of university should help volunteer organiza-

tions to formulate volunteer service systems. The first is selection system, in both recruitment and selection of leaders, there should be strict access threshold. Second is echelon construction system. Volunteer team construction should form echelon structure and ensure reasonable mobility of volunteer members using reasonable personnel structure. Third is evaluation and assessment system. Volunteer organizations set up volunteer archives for every volunteer student, record and save each time of volunteer activity, and make strict assessment of every activity. Volunteer programs should be undertaken by special person and every program should be approved before implementation. Volunteer archives will be used as basis for excellence evaluation and prize award. In addition, systems also include registration system, regular meeting system, approval of service activities, volunteer excellence assessment and commendation system. Through regulations and systems, it is expected to regulate operation procedure of volunteer services and make definite rights and obligations.

4.3 Establishing incentive mechanism for volunteer services

Volunteer services are non-reimbursable at present. When costs of volunteer services exceed the bottom line of volunteers, efficiency of volunteer service operation mechanism will show negative growth trend^[5]. If without incentive mechanism for volunteer services, vitality of student volunteer organizations will not last long.

Generally, incentive mechanism should focus on three points. Firstly, it is recommended to enhance propaganda of volunteer service spirit and concept. For example, university may propagate typical cases and excellent volunteer selection activities, to make more people know student volunteers and volunteer services, so as to raise the public recognition of university student volunteer services, create excellent volunteer service atmosphere, and promote sustainable development of student volunteer services. Secondly, it should attach great importance to material reward. For example, universities can set up special scholarship for volunteer services, give reward for those volunteers having outstanding contribution in volunteer services, and provide material reward to encourage student volunteers to actively participate in volunteer activities. Thirdly, universities should incorporate the volunteer service activity into excellent and reward assessment system. On the basis of assessment, universities should make a record of excellent volunteer students, provide prompt reward, satisfy expectation of students, link volunteer activities with comprehensive quality assessment, and link the honor of "advanced students" with volunteer activities, to make volunteers feel approval of volunteer organizations for their volunteer activities.

4.4 Innovating service form and setting up brand program

With increasing expansion of university student volunteer organizations, original service form is difficult to keep pace with development of the times. University student volunteer organizations should strengthen and improve organization and management, and promote innovation of volunteer service activities in service forms and items. At present, expanding volunteer service brands is an

common features that laws define perfectly. In other words, reasons for aiding are that they are the weak groups. In criminal cases, unfair and unjust results result from their weak status. Therefore, it is necessary for them to ask for help from laws, avoiding unfair results because of unrelated factors.

3.2 Improvement in money investment Government investment and social donation are the main sources of legal aids for migrant workers. As it is mentioned above, the fees are far away from meeting needs of legal aids for migrant farmers. Therefore, it is a must to increase investment. Firstly, the government may set up a special fund organization, enhancing social influences of criminal legal aids for migrant workers by propagating by media and holding large charity activities, enabling more people know about the importance of criminal legal aids for migrant workers. Secondly, it is necessary to adopt a method combining prizes and punishment. Currently, lottery has become the sixth industry and the major goal of setting up lotteries in China is to help the weak group just like migrant workers. So, we can draw a part from the lottery income or even the taxes paid by big winners as capital of criminal legal aids for migrant workers. Meanwhile, we can accumulate the capital for legal aids through drawing some money from capital punishment paid by criminals. Finally, after enlarging fee resources, we should establish the special organizations. It is necessary to activate the fund organization to supervise and manage it, ensuring that the fees will be used in practice in criminal legal aids for migrant workers, guaranteeing judicial rights will not be damaged.

3.3 Introducing motivation mechanism, improving quality of legal aids Problems like bad quality of defending in legal aids, as it is mentioned above, we can learn some lessons from efficient theories to introduce motivation mechanism and combine legal aids system with graded system of lawyers, benefiting lawyers in terms of prizes and interests according to the situation lawyers

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effective approach for university volunteer undertaking. Brand construction manifests maturity of public welfare undertaking. The higher the brand value, the greater the marginal effect of the volunteer undertaking. Therefore, agricultural universities should start from following three aspects to build volunteer brands. (i) Serving rural areas. Volunteer organizations in agricultural universities have advantages of being close to agriculture, farmers and rural areas, so they should combine such advantages and establish sustainable brand activities through some agricultural, rural areas and farmers supporting platforms. (ii) Contacting social public welfare organizations. University volunteer organizations should be open minded and seek cooperation with some social public welfare organizations, especially those with certain experience in rural areas, regulate themselves with high criterion of requirements, make meticulous organization, give prominence to achievements, and strive for realizing the linked effect. (iii) Active propaganda. It is recommended to build brands for the

engaged in legal aids cases. For example, when a certain amount of cases is finished, it is appropriate to promote lawyers to another level according to the results to activate lawyers to better finish aiding cases and improve defending quality. Improvement in quality of cases, it is beneficial to lawyers themselves. Therefore, lawyers will be more active in improving quality of cases. In this situation, problems such as low efficiency will be solved.

4 Conclusions

In the experiment and research of legal aids in China, most researchers put emphasis on rights protection of migrant workers, such as labor rights and interests, salary rights and so on, ignoring establishment of criminal legal aids, which does not fit in with lawsuit goals of human rights protection in China. With the rapid acceleration of urbanization, migrant workers are becoming closer to cities and they are the main strength in pushing economic development of cities. However, because of the special features of migrant workers and the imperfection of criminal legal aids, the basic judicial rights of migrant workers cannot be guaranteed. So, it is significant to set up systems of criminal legal aids and protect judicial rights of migrant workers by analyzing the current problems existing in criminal legal aids for migrant workers.

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public through network, radio and television, set up brand image, and bring into play influential power and appeal of volunteer brands of agricultural universities.

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