

The Collaboration of Quality Mentorship Network and University

MARK S. L. LEUNG, Hong Kong Quality Mentorship Network

MENG XIE, Hong Kong Quality Mentorship Network

M. K. LAI, Network for Health & Welfare Studies, Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

ABSTRACT

Quality Mentorship Network (QMN) was founded as a non-profit organization in 2010. Our aim is to promote a caring-adult culture through mentorship in Hong Kong. QMN supports the government Child Development Fund (CDF) in its mentorship programme through recruiting and networking social groups and providing training to mentors.

QMN has cooperated with the School of Professional Education and Executive Development (SPEED) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) to provide quality training to the mentors who joined the CDF projects. From 2011 to 2013, QMN developed a course named “Quality Mentorship Level One: Transforming into a Quality Youth Mentor” and about 120 adults were trained to join the CDF projects. In facing the mentors to serve the mentees for three years in the CDF projects, QMN partnered with SPEED again to establish the course named “The Quality Mentorship II: Transforming into a Supportive Supervisor” in 2013 for the experienced mentors so that they can be well trained for continuing support to the mentors. Also, PolyU Network for Health and Welfare Studies (NHWS) who conducted research on the 1st batch CDF project work as our consultant, providing theories on training and solutions on operation based on their research results. In collaboration with the NHWS, a school-based CDF project operation manual, a CDF project process data manual and a booklet on mentoring culture were jointly published.

QMN also serves as a bridge for the volunteers in CDF mentorship and involves in the recruitment of mentors from different partners actively. For example, during the 1st Batch of CDF, we successfully invited university students to be mentors. Through this mentoring process, university students have gained frontline experience in serving children in need. In the academic year of 2013, QMN had a chance to provide service-learning to students in PolyU. Students would be equipped with mentoring skill and their competencies in interpersonal effectiveness and social responsibility were also improved. However, the first attempt to open this course was not successful as the number of students could not meet the minimum requirement.

Several challenges experienced in this collaboration are worth studying. First, we are aware of the difficulties in matching with the schedule of the university’s school calendar. Second, as a supporting NGO, we try to be flexible in responding to the needs of participants. This requires more frequent and closer communication with the staff in charge which would produce extra workload. Third, direct financial support from the university would be expected as additional administrative, training and supervision works are provided by the NGO.

Nevertheless, we still treasure the cooperation with universities because it is a good opportunity for us to expand our network in mentor recruitment. Furthermore, the training certificate issued by universities can give students from our course a public recognition of academic standard and quality.

Looking into the future, there are much opportunities for university to serve

Mark S. L. Leung, Hong Kong Quality Mentorship Network, Kowloon, Hong Kong, Email: markleung@qmn.hk; Meng Xie, Hong Kong Quality Mentorship Network, Kowloon, Hong Kong, Email: mengxie@qmn.hk; M. K. Lai, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Kowloon, Hong Kong, Email: simon.lai@polyu.edu.hk.

underprivileged children in Hong Kong and the potential of service-learning and partnership with universities to meet these needs is promised. QMN will be keen on exploring the chance for university students to serve the participating children. We do believe that reducing inter-generational poverty is not a dream but a social good deed if university resources can work effectively with government and local resources.

Key Words: Social responsibility, service-learning, caring-adult culture, mentoring, school-community partnership