

VQ Sustainable Training Scheme: “*Volunteer Quotient towards Volunteer Quality*”

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Hong Kong has a long history of developing volunteer services. People from all walks of life are familiar with the concept of volunteerism while a wide variety of specific volunteer opportunities have been opening up, ranging from management roles to the execution of specific projects and tasks. There is ample evidence to suggest that people can acquire new skills, knowledge, self-reliance, creativity and develop their potential through volunteering.

The quality of volunteers and the sustainability of volunteer participation have become significant concerns within many volunteer organizations. It is expected that volunteers shall be well trained and equipped with adequate knowledge and appropriate skills to serve the needy. Further, it is believed that the enhancement of volunteer competencies and increased job satisfaction will lead to a higher commitment to volunteering.

The Agency for Volunteer Service (AVS) (<http://www.avs.org.hk>) maintains a pool of over 10,000 volunteers and the concerns mentioned above have become a really big challenge for AVS to face. In order to address some of these issues, the Volunteer Training and Development Centre was established early in 2003.

The Centre has been developed to provide a variety of training programmes and to offer resources which support the work of volunteers and volunteer management. In order to facilitate the professional development of volunteering, a resource library has been established within the Centre and we seek to deliver consultation and technical support to the users.

The VQ Sustainable Training Scheme

A new initiative of the Volunteer Training and Development Centre is the 'VQ Sustainable Training Scheme'. VQ is a concept that promotes “*Volunteer Quotient towards Volunteer Quality*” and is an attempt to provide progressive

training to enhance the quality of our volunteers as well as to sustain their commitment and aspiration of helping others. The scheme has been launched since 2003 for in house volunteers and it is expected to commit at least 3 years time to make it in full function. Constant review on its development will be carried according to the training needs of volunteers as well as the enhancement of service development.

“Volunteer Quotient” embraces a cognitive, affective and experiential level of learning. It is believed that if a volunteer embraces good volunteer 'quotients', then he/she will become an outstanding volunteer of high quality. This pioneering training programme is designed to teach the Volunteer Quotient elements of better knowledge, greater attitudes and good practices. The concept is derived from the knowledge of effective volunteer service management - a right person with talent and passion, being placed in a proper position, to exercise fully his/her full potentials to bring utmost benefits to the society. VQ training is a means to strengthen the equipment of a right person and to fit the matching of a right job.

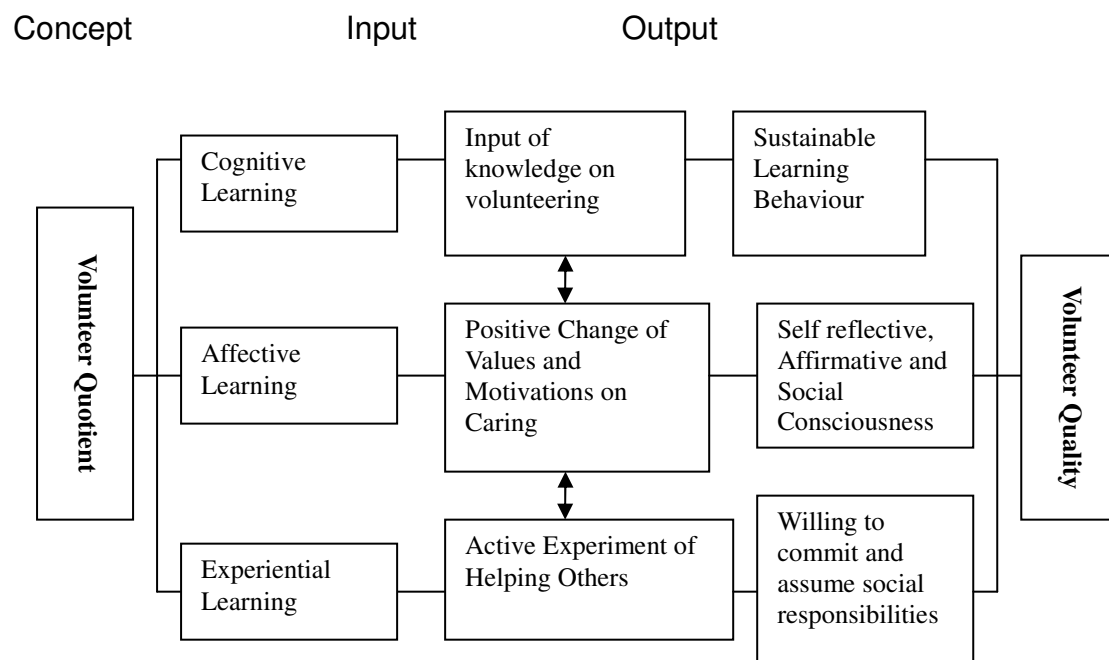
In catering to the needs of volunteers, a working group in combination of training experts, working staff and volunteers (customers) has been formed to design and develop the curriculum of training. The scheme so far has received a favorable response from schools and the general community although they have to afford a certain amount of training fees. AVS has planned to explore new funds to support the development of the scheme so that more volunteers from service organizations can be benefited from this training scheme at a lower rate of fee charging.

The final aim of the scheme is to adopt an intensive and progressive training mode to train up and equip volunteers, to sustain their motivation and commitment, to promote the quality of services, and ultimately to bring utmost benefits to the community. Volunteers are encouraged to participate on voluntary basis subject to their own freewill to commit. Besides of granting the accreditation of being a volunteer attaining a certain degree of quality, it also serves a benchmark to identify volunteers with special talents and skills in matching with specific volunteer jobs properly.

Because volunteers do so many different things, no one training curriculum can meets all needs. Therefore, VQ focuses on universal volunteering skills that are useful in many settings (good listening, empathy for clients, etc.) Moreover, the scheme also offers a wide variety of related training topics in each curriculum so that volunteers can base on their needs and interest, and to have more choices to develop their new knowledge, skills and capacity building.).

VQ Conceptual Framework

The following flowchart demonstrates the conceptual framework of the VQ Sustainable Training scheme:



The three parallel stages of learning can be summarised this way:

- **Cognitive Learning:** to convey knowledge of volunteering to volunteers through various training means and sustainable training modes. It aims to encourage them to build up their own repertoire of knowledge to serve the needy in a proper and competent manner.
- **Affective Learning:** to nurture volunteers to employ a positive attitude and value towards volunteering. Active reflection and de-briefing help volunteers to raise and internalize their aspiration in helping and caring in a consistent and sustainable way.

- **Experiential Learning:** to provide appropriate opportunities for volunteers to participate actively in volunteer service, to experiment and integrate their learning into practice, as well as to apply volunteerism in their daily lives.

Through these stages, VQ provides a training model not only to enhance volunteer quality to provide better service but also to sustain the participation and aspiration of helping others as an essence of life. Therefore, there is a wide scope of training subjects provided to fit for the needs of volunteers coming from all walks of life. The content covers:-

Leisure and Interest – to develop own hobbies from some interest class (e.g. magic playing and craft making) and to transfer the skills in making funs with their service clients in children centre or hospitals, etc.

Self Development and Enhancement – training subjects on problem solving, confidence building and self understanding etc. can help strengthen the capacity of own as well as to enhance their confidence and commitment to serving.

Practice Skills Learning – to identify some practice skills with basic, intermediate and advance levels e.g. communication skills, programme planning, crisis management and team building, etc. which are related to their service practice.

Levels of Achievement

The training content comprises three levels of achievement that volunteers are encouraged to complete and the series will be organized quarterly so that volunteers can manage their own study plan throughout the year. As a pilot practice, the training target has not been classified specifically at this phase and all volunteers are welcome to join the scheme. To facilitate a better output and impact measures, the course modules will be adjusted quarterly to cater for the various needs and different backgrounds of volunteers, e.g., students, housewives, seniors, professionals, etc.

The three levels of achievement are:

Elementary Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic concepts of volunteerism • Sharing and demonstration of excellent project experience • Visits to service recipients and serving organizations • Service skills (listening, escorting, communication, games playing, etc.) • Leisure and interest class
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Intermediate Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership training • Programme planning • Group leading • Teamwork building • Self understanding and confidence enhancement
Advance Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic volunteer management system and skills • Problem solving • Crisis intervention • Supervision and leading skills • Experiment project and exercises

By measuring the service outcome, some criteria for assessing the achievement of three levels of training have been set for monitoring and evaluation:

- **Elementary Level for VQ Volunteer Beginners:** to attain at least 5 hours of basic training activities, plus at least 5 hours of volunteer service within a year
- **Intermediate Level for VQ Volunteer Fellows:** to attain at least 10 additional hours of leadership training activities, plus 15 hours of volunteer service within a year
- **Advance Level for VQ Volunteer Leaders:** to attain at least 50 hours additional training and practice in volunteer management within a year, plus commendation and assessment

We use the titles of 'Beginner', 'Fellow', and 'Leader' to designate each level. Trainees can be granted a VQ Certificate after the completion of each level of the training series. Upon the completion of all 3 levels of training, the volunteer will be granted a 'VQ Award' to certify that she or he is a 'quality volunteer' with Volunteer Quotient.

AVS expects to encourage and recruit those volunteers earning VQ Awards to to play a leadership role in helping to develop the services of the agency. If the pool becomes too large, they will also be referred out to serve other volunteer organizations so that the impact can bring greater benefits to the community at large.

To assure the continuous development of VQ Awardees, an extension of our training programmes and 'train the trainer' schemes will be developed to cater further for their ongoing development. Moreover, for achieving a further height, it is expected to eventually connect the training scheme to college credits or other external qualifications e.g. Credential Volunteer Administration programme, etc.

Volunteer Trainers

In catering for the tremendous training needs and regularity of the training sessions, additional trainers are needed. As to strengthen the existing manpower pool to complement, enrich and extend the service delivery, AVS has already developed a pool of over 30 volunteer trainers and 50 professional tutors to help deliver the training modules. Without monetary reward, professional trainers and tutors are recruited, trained and placed in various positions and training subjects. Trainers are the main presenters and coordinators of the course and tutors will play the role as assistant and mentors of the trainees. 'Train the Trainer' programmes and regular network meetings have also been launched during this period.

Target of Trainees

The target of potential trainees has been identified as:-

- ***In-house volunteers:*** an existing pool of over ten thousand volunteers already registered with AVS
- ***Outside volunteers:*** volunteers from community organizations are also invited to participate in the training series on an individual basis or to tailor-make the training package to suit their own organizational needs
- ***The Public:*** promotion and publicity will be directed at the public to attract more people from the general public to participate in our volunteer workforce after attaining the basic orientation programmes

Evaluation and Outcomes

The evaluation of the programme will be based on an evaluation questionnaire, attendance records, verbal feedback from both the trainees and trainers, the number of trainees reaching course requirements, and a regular review on the programme's progress. The scheme will be evaluated and reviewed annually both in terms of quantitative and qualitative measurements. Recipients of those volunteer services (agencies or individuals) will be asked to assess the quality of that service and whether any positive change is occurred since the training.

Overall, the expected outcomes of this training scheme are:

1. A regular training package will be tailored to the needs of volunteers in order to build up their own repertoire both in terms of knowledge and

skills.

2. Volunteers will become more confident and competent to deliver good quality services.
3. A recognition system will be established for volunteers to attain different levels of training progressively and to sustain their commitment to self-learning and volunteering.
4. Volunteers who attain VQ certificates and awards will demonstrate progressive improvement in work performance and a higher commitment and motivation to self-learning.
5. The promotion of Volunteer Quotient in the aspects of cognitive, affective and experiential measures will help raise the aspiration of volunteers and sustain their commitment to volunteer.

Since its operation last year, the VQ training scheme has been implementing for about eight months. Over five hundred of trainees have already joined the venture of continuous self study and learning within the volunteer field. To achieve the ultimate goal of adding value to our tremendous volunteer pool, AVS has to explore more outside resources including funds and manpower of expertise to help develop a wider scope of service delivery. Moreover, a strong infrastructure of project management system and computerized data base system should also be well established to manage its full operations during the period. Hoping to share more about its work progress and new developments in coming journals later on!

(2003, Hong Kong)