

On Construction of the Volunteer Roles in Urban Community Governance

—A Case Study of Guangming Community of Nanchang City

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Abstract

In urban community governance, how to give full play to the volunteer roles and ensure a coordinated development between the two remains an important issue. Through the investigation of Guangming Community in Nanchang City, it is found that extensive volunteer participation can play a unique and vital role based on the existing urban community governance resources. To promote the integration of social volunteers and college student volunteers and bring into full play their enthusiasm and initiatives under the correct guidance is conducive to carrying out urban community governance more efficiently and enriching the main body of governance, expanding governance channels and solving the problems existed in urban communities and people's livelihood. This paper takes the governance of Guangming Community in Nanchang City as an example in an attempt to promote the voluntary works in urban community governance.

Keywords

Urban Community Governance, Volunteer Roles, Social Volunteers, College Student Volunteers

1. Introduction

The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China put forward that it's crucial to strengthen the construction of the community governance system, shift the focus of social governance to the community level and support the social organization in better playing their roles so that a pattern of positive interplay among the government management, social regulation and residents'

self-governance can realize. All these reflect a new trend of the community governance in a new era, that is, further building a four-in-one model of government, society, community and residents. As a link between the society and the community, volunteer emerges as a unique and increasingly significant part of the urban community governance. Currently, masses, colleges students have made up the main body of volunteers. Theoretically speaking, volunteer activities help to establish a superior service platform for public well-being, serving the people by practical action. In practice, to further understand the code of conduct and service standards of volunteers and then integrate the theories with practices is an effective way to realize a balanced development of the community governance in the cities. This paper takes the model of volunteer participation in governance in Guangming Community of Nanchang City as an example to analyze and discuss how can volunteers better play their roles in community governance in an attempt to bring out the best in community volunteers and achieve a better governance effect and sustainable development for the urban communities.

Being an integral part of the society, the development of volunteers has drawn wide attention in the contemporary society while the volunteer activity has evolved into a highly organized and rather popular one as well. Numerous non-profit organizations and other social autonomic organizations have followed the trend by conducting volunteer activities, which has fully exemplified the diversity of this new era. In a word, the exploration and analysis of the main body of this trend are conducive to better construction of the volunteer roles.

2. The Construction of Volunteer Roles: Basic Concepts.

2.1. Definition and Connotation of the Volunteer Roles

Although there is different academic understanding of the concept of volunteers, the definition and connotation of volunteers are widely accepted, that is, a person who freely offers to work for an organization without being forced to do it. In China, volunteer refers to a person with certain skills who works for relevant organizations, which goes beyond his duties, uses the existing resources of society within a proper range and carries out long-term service activities within his capabilities to serve social public welfare undertakings and help those in need, yet not seek any material, financial and related interests in return [1]. According to the Voluntary Service Ordinance issued in 2017, voluntary service refers to the public welfare services provided by volunteers, voluntary service organizations and other organizations voluntarily and gratuitously to the society or others [2]. A successful voluntary activity requires volunteers to contribute both their own time and energy. Also, it can be carried out by the volunteers themselves in accordance with the law. In promoting the development of the voluntary service cause, the Voluntary Service Ordinance put forward that governments at all levels and related departments must take steps to push forward further development and encourage relevant organizations to take corresponding measures as well. Exploring the construction of volunteer role in community is

the bedrock of the implementation and development of voluntary service in community governance.

2.2. The Value Connotation of Volunteer Service

1) For society: It seeks to pass love and care, aiming to carry forward fine morality, make full use of social resources, build an enabling and harmonious environment and ultimately promote the advancement of the society.

2) For volunteers: It enables them to improve morality, enrich life experiences, promote self-development through learning and exploring and ultimately make their due contribution to the society.

3) For service objects: It gives them access to customized and efficient service as well as amicable social care and ultimately involves more citizens into the society with a strong sense of belonging.

Community constitutes the basic unit of the whole society. Community governance not only serves as a way of social governance, but also as an important part of the national governance. As a result, it is essential to strengthen the understanding of the definition and connotation of community management. Professor Wang Dahai, chairman of the Department of Public Administration of the School of Management of Beijing Normal University, said: "Community management refers to a series of self-governance or administrative activities carried out by various institutions, groups or organizations within a certain community in order to maintain the normal order of the community, promote the development and prosperity of the community and meet specific needs of community residents, such as material and cultural activities [3]. As the society develops, great progress has been made in reforming and innovating the way of community governance, and the significance of volunteer service cannot be ignored.

2.3. The Definition of Volunteerism

The spirit of volunteerism can be understood as the ideology of humanistic care, rights protection, social responsibility and public benefit altruism, which are value-oriented, voluntary and do not participate in promoting social progress for economic reward. It is a spirit of helping each other without seeking return, but also a spirit of giving love for others and the society without material rewards. It advocates mutual help, self-help and independence, selfless dedication, no return, volunteer spirit is our precious spiritual wealth, is an important force to promote social progress, is the product of the development of The Times, is the social attention to the spirit of The Times. Therefore, every citizen of us has the responsibility to carry forward the spirit of volunteerism.

3. The Construction of Volunteer Roles: Role Interaction and Social Recognition

In Jacob Moreno's early works, he put forward the role theory which divided the role into three major types: "physical and mental role", "psychological role" and "social role", and considered the concept of role as its core. Among them the so-

cial role refers to the social status or social role of a person in a particular context. Social psychologist noted that people's social status defines his behaviors, and so does the script to the actors. H·H·Kelley and J·W·Tibault suggest that role is not only the expectation system of the behavior of the individual in a certain position during the interaction, but also the expectation of the individual in a certain position to his own behavior [4]. The role and expectation, role and interaction are rather closely connected: On the one hand, both sides of the interaction are required to follow certain norms to conduct communication. Imbalance between the two sides may lead to an interruption of the interaction or change the direction of it. Also, people's ability to play the role of others is crucial for the interactive process, which enables people to identify and understand others or even predict the reactions of others. On the other hand, interaction entail two parties. Both sides are so essential that the role would lost the condition of dependency with only one single side. By the same token, in the course of community governance, only by interaction can volunteer role construction be fully completed. This kind of interactive process is mainly manifested in the "role expectation" and "role performance". As people's views on the role changes along with the times, their expectation is not fixed as well given that every participant's understanding of the role and the external masses' expectation of the role may differs greatly and so on. In another word, role players will constantly adjust their behavior based on the feedback from the outside world in order to better play their their roles. In conducting community governance work at the Guangming Community in Nanchang, the masses seek to better play their roles as volunteer during the interaction by imagining others' feelings about their own behavior and appearance and conducting self-examination. By doing so, they manage to better understand and shape themselves.

Classical role theory holds that the interaction between roles has two functions: first, the masses's expectation for roles; second, the actors' understanding of their own roles and their practical actions. Therefore, the construction of roles not only calls for a joint effort of the people and society, but also requires an enabling external environment.

4. The Construction Process of Volunteer Roles

As noted above, the process of volunteer roles construction the construction process of volunteer role is based on the interaction and recognition of volunteers' understanding of their own role and the masses' expectation of volunteer role. The construction process mainly includes three stages: first, volunteers must have a clear cognition of their own role, which is crucial to standardize the behavior of volunteers themselves and form their performance of the role; Second, the masses give feedback afterward based on their expectation for the volunteers so that the latter can further identify the criteria of mass recognition; third, the continuous interaction between volunteers and the masses helps to shape the role of volunteers with increasing social recognition [5]. In pushing

forward innovation of community governance, the specific practice of volunteer role has injected important strength into the governance of the community.

4.1. Volunteers' Understanding of Their Roles

According to the Chinese reality, volunteers are considered as people who voluntarily contribute their time and energy to offer helps to individuals or the masses in need, regardless of material rewards, promoting social progress, social welfare and the long-term development of mankind. Volunteers will have a deeper understanding of the role after voluntary activities, gradually understand the connotation of the role of volunteers, pay attention to their own code of conduct, and realize how to better serve the people. In the course of interaction, there will be a change in role cognition, from then on, the masses will have more trust in the role of volunteers, and in turn volunteers will have a clearer understanding of their own role.

4.2. The Masses's Expectation of the Volunteers Roles

The development of the volunteer activities, to a large extent, has further upgraded the process of community governance. Normally, before putting the volunteer activities in place, the masses will have expectations for the role of volunteers. In the case of Guangming Community in Nanchang City, the masses help to improve the community volunteer service system by delivering feedback to volunteers on their behavior while the volunteers are committed to building a widely-accepted brand of the community volunteer activities through relentless endeavors and practices. To draw a conclusion, the interaction between volunteers and the masses is of great significance to volunteers themselves as the latter's expectation and feedback play an important guiding role in the construction of volunteer roles.

On the one hand, with the understanding of their own roles keeps in mind, volunteers realized their own values by carrying out volunteer activities, strengthening their recognition of the work and identity. On the other hand, volunteer work featured unpaid, equality, helping others, spiritual gains, voluntary spirit, integrity, legality. And it's known for its spirit of utter devotion and positive impact. The rapid development of modern society calls for more public involvement in the volunteer activities, generating a sound role interaction so as to establish an enabling environment for community-based volunteer activities. The construction of volunteer role is a dynamic development process as the society is developing at an accelerating speed and the human thought is also changing constantly. The interaction between the individual and the society as well as the interaction among individual, the surrounding environment and the masses are completed in the dynamic.

4.3. Analysis of the Main Body in the Construction of Volunteers Roles

On February 3, 2016, General Secretary Xi Jinping paid a visit to Guangming

Community. With the encouragement of the General Secretary, remarkable achievement has been made here since the community remained committed to focusing on party building and service-based governance as a way to meet the needs of community residents and further put the policy of serving the people into fully effect. At the same time, so proactive the volunteer service is that the volunteers, as the key of it, plays an increasingly significant role and makes a greater difference in the course of community construction.

The masses constitute the major part of volunteer groups. Guangming Community in Nanchang is a case in point. The masses figure prominently in the construction of community, social organization and social work team. Community governance is complementary in business positioning and systematic in work deployment, which not only serves as an important engine driving the social construction forward, but also a key field of innovative social governance. The construction of Guangming Community is to take the social masses as the main body of volunteers, and the special group in the society-college students volunteers to assist in governance, jointly carry out community governance, and improve the construction of volunteer role.

Volunteer services in Guangming Community enjoys extensive participation: 16 volunteer teams and nearly 1000 volunteers stand ready to provide free services to residents 24 hours a day, setting up “rescue banks” (a bank that provides a range of activities to assist vulnerable groups) and “moral banks” to offer services for vulnerable groups like the elderly and the disabled. Alongside that, a residents’ council was put in place, solving domestic and public affairs with joint effort. It also works to provide legal aid to clients, help students in financial difficulties to complete their studies and conduct community activities like setting up free calligraphy classes, carrying out free home appliance maintenance, daily cleaning, going on patrols, helping to buy items to launching voluntary donations and so on [6].

The “moral bank” mentioned above is not a bank in the traditional sense, but a bank that deposits students’ good moral behavior. It imitates the form of a bank. Students can exchange their excellent moral behaviors at school, in society and at home into a certain moral currency and deposit it in a moral bank. If they have bad behaviors and habits, they will consume a certain moral currency. In this way, it is an evaluation and management mechanism to standardize students’ behaviors and cultivate students’ good behaviors and habits and improve their comprehensive qualities.

The masses, to a large extent, have become a principal part in the process of community governance in the case of Guangming Community. Thus it can be seen that college student volunteers, as a special group, failed to fully play their roles. As a matter of fact, college students are the most active, cordial and serious groups in voluntary activities as they don’t have any direct conflict with the interests of the community [7]. However, lack of social experience and timely voluntary information, and a tendency of feeling confused easily are the problems

we face in engaging more college student volunteers into the voluntary works. It is necessary for the government to weigh in and forge the development of volunteer work ahead in a more correct direction. From my perspective, in the construction of the role of volunteers, we must take the social masses as the main body and give full play to the college student volunteers under the guidance of the government so as to improve community governance and ensure a bright and promising future for the development of Guangming Community.

5. Innovation of Service Platform in the Construction of Volunteer Roles

5.1. Promotion of Cooperation between the Community, Social Groups and Workers

Volunteers' extensive participation in community governance in Guangming Community of Nanchang can indeed be used as a model to follow for most communities, but there are still some problems, such as the lack of integration among government, society and professional services. As one of the first batch of model cities of harmonious community construction in China, Panzhihua City in Sichuan Province has brought us valuable experiences in community management, that is, to harness the power of the community itself, other social organizations and social workers. We seek to establish a social organization incubation center which is supported by the government, operated by the wider society with professional spirit, adopting the mode of "1 plus 1 plus N", which refers to one service platform, one pivotal social organization and numerous social groups that would like to join in. By doing so, we work to enrich the cultural and recreational life of the community and engage more social organizations into volunteer activities in the community, addressing the practical problems of the residents and promoting the community governance in a harmonious manner [8].

5.2. Construction of Information Platform and Delivery of Efficient Services

In 2006, the Shanghai Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau has developed an information service platform for handling community affairs and has integrated old and new information in 2017, basically constituting an information system featured a unified framework, inter-connectivity and comprehensive coverage. Guangming Community can also develop its service system to provide an information-sharing platform for volunteer groups who seek or can provide help. In this way, the public can ask for help through platforms such as the Guangming Community Public Service WeChat Official Account. This approach requires the support of the government and authoritative certification in order to gain the trust of more people and provide information for volunteers who are willing to help but have no way to do so. In this highly informationized modern society, the emergence of the Internet helps to reduce the obstacles in the process of volunteer role con-

struction and realize the efficient docking of voluntary activities, making the community governance service more intelligent and the way of community governance more innovative than ever before.

6. Conclusion

As one of the typical cases of community governance, there is a lot of advanced experience we can draw on from the example of Guangming Community, in which the participation of volunteer roles has also made remarkable achievements. This paper aims to land a deeper understanding of the construction of volunteer roles through interpretation and analysis. To draw a conclusion, volunteers form cognition of their own roles and then act in line with the expectations and feedback of the masses. The process fully demonstrates that the volunteers' understanding of their own roles is as important as the interaction and recognition of the masses. At the same time, community governance must be carried out under the guidance of the government while giving full play to the strength of the college student volunteers so as to achieve the coordinated development of internal volunteers and external helpers. In addition, it is of great significance to improve and innovate the volunteer service platform, learn from excellent community governance experience and upgrade the volunteer service mechanism in shaping the volunteer roles.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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