

## **University's Collaboration with Schools on Adolescence Development among Disadvantaged Youths**

EUDORA K.L. CHAN, Network for Health & Welfare Studies, Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

PAUL K. H. YAO, Network for Health & Welfare Studies, Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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

### **ABSTRACT**

Service-learning is widely adopted in university curriculum to connect classroom with the community. Such connection implies reciprocity between service providers and the community, and allows for cultivation of social responsibility. Network for Health and Welfare Studies (Network) under the Department of Applied Social Sciences, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, was appointed as consultant to aid implementation of the first batch school-based Child Development Fund project (CDF) in three schools. CDF accumulates developmental assets for disadvantaged children and aims to alleviate intergenerational poverty in the long run. Network's participation in human resources management, program operation, and follow-up evaluation, fulfills university social responsibility by attending to the community's needs.

In terms of human resources management, Network dedicated manpower to hold induction sessions, recruit targeted participants, and screen potential mentors prior to project commencement. Close connection with the university faculty allows Master's students with Applied Psychology and Education Psychology background to participate in CDF as placement, and contribute their expertise to deliver theory-driven training for the schools. Furthermore, as consultant, Network provides supervision on implementation progress. Process data and report deadlines were closely monitored to secure service standards. In terms of operation, Network connects multi-disciplinary service providers to organize advanced educational activities beneficial to students' personal development and career and life planning. Psychology Master's students and the Quality Mentorship Network – an NGO specialized in mentor training – held workshops on multiple-intelligence, goal-setting and financial planning. In addition to CDF core activities, through Network, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Open University of Hong Kong offered to contribute resources to enrich learning experiences for underprivileged children. Activities held by the two universities include advanced professional GPS and Water Sampling fieldtrips. Network acting as the medium through which community resources can be accessible to CDF participants demonstrates fulfillment of social responsibility. Finally, at each quarter year throughout project implementation, Network's professional researchers analyze process data and generate statistical reports for service quality inspection. Toward the end of the project, the research team also evaluates project implementation and examines its effect on adolescence development.

Network's collaboration with the three schools on the CDF project highlighted university's roles and ability to fulfill social responsibility. Expertise and arrangement of course-relevant placement allow flexible and professional operation on community services. Nonetheless, challenges exist in introducing fresh agents to contribute original

Eudora K. L. Chan, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Kowloon, Hong Kong, Email: [eu.chan@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:eu.chan@polyu.edu.hk); Paul K. H. Yao, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Kowloon, Hong Kong, Emails: [paulyao@qmn.hk](mailto:paulyao@qmn.hk); M. K. Lai, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Kowloon, Hong Kong, Email: [simon.lai@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:simon.lai@polyu.edu.hk).

ideas, as well as preserving expertise to maintain and pass on good practices. Future studies can investigate sustainable large-scale service-learning and community projects in universities, and provide insights on program design and school policy to cultivate enduring reciprocity between university and the community.

**Key Words:** Social responsibility, service-learning, school-community partnerships, adolescence development, inter-generational poverty