

UK Sports Volunteering Research Network

- Seminar on 19th March 2015
- Presentation from Clare Holdsworth, Keele University.
- All material in these slides belongs to the authors.
- For more information about the SVRN please see the website <http://svrn.group.shef.ac.uk> or contact the secretary at Fiona.Reid@gcu.ac.uk.

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Volunteer or Voluntold? Clare Holdsworth, Keele University UK

UK Sports Volunteering Research Network
Research Seminar
Thursday 19th March 2015



HE Student Volunteering

- Research on student volunteering and HE community engagement since 2006 (ESRC, University-funded, NCCPE in collaboration with IVR)
- Volunteer with organisations seeking to recruit volunteers
- How and what do students learn about social justice through volunteering?
- Impact of employability agenda: who benefits and motives for volunteering?
- Promotion of volunteering



Enfranchising Volunteering

If everyone volunteers, or is expected to volunteer, what does this mean for volunteering and how can we promote volunteering without making it obligatory?



Volunteering as a tick box activity

- Student Volunteer commenting on High School Experiences:
- Everyone had to have some sort of experience of volunteering, I think it was just like a tick, tick box sort of thing that they made students do. **But a lot of people you know resented you know being 'forced' to do voluntary work ...** We were actually, yeah, you know quite explicitly as like the reason for justifying volunteer work. So you know, yeah, if you volunteer you'll stand out more as a person to us and we'll be able to write more about you when it comes to university applications.

Promoting volunteering at University

- "It's just like another thing for students that you know we have to do now isn't it? Work, work experience, volunteer, all these things for the university" [Student Volunteer]
- "Seeing as it's kind of being pushed down our throats that you need to volunteer to get jobs, you need to do this, do that, it's not as well promoted as you'd expect it to be if they want you to get ahead of the game." [Student Non-volunteer].



Distinctiveness

What gives students 'the edge' when studying at the University of Edinburgh?

One of the many answers to this question is the myriad opportunities open to them at the University to develop themselves alongside their academic studies. There are a vast array of co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities and these can include activities such as involvement in student clubs and societies, work experience, volunteering, student representation, peer-assisted learning, ambassadorial roles for academic schools etc. However, we also know that too often many students overlook these opportunities or fail to recognise the value of activities they are already engaged in.

Generic Distinctiveness

- Is an oxymoron but is hegemonic
- Explanation: Individualism, responsibility and control
- Graduate attributes: generic skills to make the case for investment in HE transposed to individual students.
- Technologies and infrastructure
 - HEAR
 - eportfolios (pebblepad)
 - Millennium volunteers/vinspire/ Saltire Award



Implications for student volunteering-1

- Being asked, not told and the serendipity of engagement:
 - at the time my PE teacher was going on maternity leave and she asked three girls maybe to take over the netball team for the lower school.
 - So that's what I do and that's good, I mean firstly it's just helping out a friend really it started [self-defence]

Implications for student volunteering-2

- Evidence for subjective benefits of volunteering.
 - There was another motive for me wanting to volunteer, it wasn't just getting experience, **it was actually a confidence kind of building thing** to meet more people and stuff because my interpersonal skills at the time weren't very good, so I kind of you know wanted to be exposed to loads of different things in an effort to try and you know build that up.
- Relative benefits of volunteering are not proven.
 - Well I thought it would obviously make you look like you're good at time management, good with, well it was, and it's sort of extra curricular, anything that will make you stand out sort of thing.

Solutions for student volunteering?

- Social literacy: Young people who can successfully and deliberately mediate their world as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.
- Deconstructive and Reproductive Volunteering:
 - Deconstructive: Young people have resources to recognise and challenge power relations and inequality in society,
 - Reproductive: young people unknowingly reproducing dominant power structures through their involvement.

Implications for sports volunteering

- Sports volunteer is an important entry route into other forms of volunteering
- Benefit from the voluntold with larger pool of volunteers?
- Distinction between placements and volunteering
- Developing specific skills and qualifications (e.g coaching)
- Fuzziness between work/volunteer

Conclusion

- Policy and societal changes in volunteering
- Employability rather than social justice?
- Challenges in enfranchisement of volunteering
- Is no simple win/win – might be a larger pool of potential volunteering but conditions of engagement are changing
- Sports volunteering provides an alternative route?