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Inna Kurlishchuk, Oksana Aleksieieva

Інна Курліщук, Оксана Алексєєва

UNIVERSITY STUDENT VOLUNTEERING AS A MODERN TREND IN UKRAINIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

СТУДЕНТСЬКЕ ВОЛОНТЕРСТВО ЯК СУЧАСНИЙ ТРЕНД УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ СИСТЕМИ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ

This article reviews the peculiarities of university student volunteering as a modern trend in Ukrainian Higher Education. The authors examine a sample of 187 university students on whether they volunteer, are interested in volunteering, and how they make sense of the impacts that volunteering has on them.
Key words: *trend, educational trend, volunteering, university student volunteering, voluntary activities, voluntary work*

The system of Ukrainian Higher Education has changed over the past decade in response to more dynamic social environment, widely spreading world trends of globalization and integration which expect university graduates to have not only more relevant knowledge and professional skills that ensure competitiveness on the world market but a range of social skills and personal qualities that are necessary for modern Ukrainian society growth. The volunteering is reviewed as an essential part of undergraduates' social life and as a resource of positive socialization and better understanding of patterns of modern political, economical and social environment or populations different from the student's own. Furthermore, the volunteering stimulates personal student growth in developing personal qualities and knowledge related to the chosen profession. Students' participation in the volunteer movement gives them the strong opportunity to make a personal contribution to solving social problems and check their own possibilities. Recent targeted universities initiatives have sought to strengthen the role of social volunteering in education process of Higher Education. There is, therefore, an actual statement that promoting student

volunteering is beneficial for students, universities and institutions in which they carry out their volunteer work.

Studying trends of modern Ukrainian higher education it is necessary to emphasize that they reflected not only the specific of teaching process (online education, adaptive learning, new technologies etc.) but the processes of student personal development (developing talents and potentials, forming personal skills such as leadership, self-confidence, communicative skills, emotional intelligence, tolerance, self-actualisation, social-oriented qualities and positive socialization etc.) as well.

Today the problem of modern trends in Ukrainian Higher Education is in the focus of pedagogical researches. Numerous of studies shed on some light on strategies and perspectives in the developing of Ukrainian Higher Education (G. Dmytrenko, 2013; V. Satsyk, 2014); to analyze modern educational reforms (Ye. Nikolaiev, 2017); to describe the role of educational innovations and trends (O. Aleksieieva, 2017; Ye. Sulima, 2013).

“National Strategy of Education Development in Ukraine for 2012 – 2020” (2012), “The Concept of Life Learning Education” (2013), “The Concept of Development of Education in Ukraine for 2015 – 2025” (2015) etc. envisage modernization the system of education, in particular Higher Education. They declare the orientation on update of the accreditation process in accordance with the European standards, creation of higher education standards designed in the needs of students, creation facilities for effective research activities, fostering academic integrity and cooperation with national and international society, government and non-government organizations in the area of higher education. One of the key components of Ukrainian National Education Strategy is the development of the moral and cultural environment in a university and in the country through using educational social-oriented activities to teach students about socially supported norms and types of behavior.

Taking into account all aforementioned information, it is obviously that volunteering work has a great potential for university students’ social growth as well

as personal qualities and professional knowledge developing which are necessary under the circumstances higher education modernization.

In pedagogical, psychological and social theory and practice, a considerable number of researches on the issue of volunteering has been conducted (O. Bezpalko et al., 2001; V. Gerasimova, 2013; V. Hodgkinson, 2003; D. Horielov, 2015; T. Lyakh et al., 2011; A. Omoto & M. Snyder, 2002; I. Zvereva, 2004) and in particular, students' volunteering (E. Balashov et al., 2016; Z. Bondarenko, 2007; C. Holdsworth and G. Brewis, 2014; P. MacNeela and N. Gannon, 2014; T. Rudiakevych, 2004).

Analysis of the work above authors shows that they contain a wealth of scientific theoretical and empirical material which is the foundation of the study of sources. Nevertheless, a number of modern aspects of university student volunteering required further study.

The aim of this paper is to review the impacts that volunteer work has on university students and to analyze the main features and reasons for their volunteering; and to emphasize on the necessity of supporting student volunteering as one of the most important trend in the process of innovative Ukrainian Higher Education nowadays.

According to the aim the following tasks are determined: 1) to conduct a theoretical analysis on the issue studied; 2) to characterize peculiarities of modern university student volunteering movement; 3) to provide the students' questionnaire on the problem of identifying their attitudes toward volunteering and interpret the received empirical data.

Today the term "volunteerism" (from the Latin "voluns" (choose) or "velle" (want)) is used to refer the altruistic activity and providing free services by an individual or group. The definitions of volunteerism also focused on aspects of helping another without financial or material rewards, but emphasized the volunteer's free will. It is obviously that volunteering has benefits for the volunteer as well as for

the person or community who received the volunteering service. It is also renowned for social and professional skill development and is often intended to promote volunteer's self-realization.

According to Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Volunteering" (2011), volunteer work is voluntary, altruistic, socially oriented nonprofit activity that is carried out by volunteers and volunteer organizations by way of rendering volunteer aid. Volunteer work is a form of charity. Volunteer work is based on the principles of lawfulness, humanity, equality, voluntariness, freedom of cost, altruism and non-profit nature [9].

S. Ellis and K. Campbell are noted that volunteering is the choice «to act in recognition of a need, with an attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit, going beyond one's basic obligations» [2, p. 4].

R. Stebbins named a volunteer as «someone who performs, even for a short period of time, volunteer work in either an informal or a formal setting. It is through volunteer work that a person provides a service or benefit to one or more individuals, usually receiving no pay» [8, p. 156].

Often volunteering is considered in terms of altruistic, socially-active and beneficial behaviour in which the subject satisfies both individual and social needs [1; 3; 5].

On a basis of the literature analysis [4; 6; 7] we determined student volunteering as a key component of successful personal, social and professional development. We can understand university student volunteering as different types pro-social activities that students do by their own choice. Practical voluntary work connects students with the community outside the university. Voluntary work offers volunteers the opportunities and skills which will help them in future lives and careers. It is obvious that university student volunteering is an excellent way to develop valuable skills in leadership, teamwork, problem-solving that will be easily transferred to the future workplace.

So, volunteer activity has received wide social dissemination in Ukraine. Volunteer work allows young people, in particular, undergraduates to learn and gain self-realization through assistance to their society. Volunteering is an important part of development of moral and spiritual values, motivation of altruism, formation of such qualities as tolerance, empathy etc.

The author's empirical research on the issue included the students' questionnaire on the problem of identifying their attitudes toward volunteerism, as well as determining the main features of modern student volunteering movement. The sample of the study consisted of 187 students. The student participants were selected from two Institutes of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University (Luhanska obl., Starobilsk) including Institute of Information Technologies and Institute of Tourism and Technology of Public Service and were at different stages of their studies: 67 of them had been studying for 3 years; 64 of them were the second – year students whereas the remainder (56) was the first – year – students. The questionnaire was conducted during the academic year 2016 – 2017. The median age of the respondents was 19 years old. Approximately 56 % of the respondents were male. According to the tasks of the study we created the original questionnaire aimed at purposes of our research, standardization of which is described below. The questionnaire was with both closed (answers were previously determined) and open (answers were not previously determined) questions.

The questionnaire starts with demographic question section. It traditionally includes questions about age (an open-ended question), gender (male or female) and student status (1st –year student, 2nd – year student or 3rd year student). The information about students' answers on this section of the questionnaire is provided above.

Demographic question section followed by the question “Have you ever been a volunteer?” (yes- or no-answer). Next, students were asked if they were a current volunteer (yes- or no-answer) and when they volunteered last time (“couple of days ago”, “week ago”, “month ago”, “more than three months ago”, “about six months ago”, “about one year ago”). Students were also asked how often they volunteer an

average (“several hours per day”, “several hours per week”, “several hours per month”, “several times per quarter”, “several hours per year”) and how they were involved in volunteer activity (“on their own decision”, “at the recommendation of faculty tutor” and “other” with a write-in text box).

Of course, students were asked whether their volunteer work was related to their future profession (yes or no) and whether they would prefer to work more or less hours (“like to volunteer more hours”, “like to volunteer fewer hours”, “like to continue volunteering the same number of hours”, “like to stop volunteer”, “it is difficult to give an answer”).

Then students were asked to indicate their motivation for volunteering, and given the following response choices: “to meet the need,” “to obtaining real world experience”, “to help future career”, “to understand my future profession”, “to support needs of society”, “university recommends volunteering”, “to make one to feel better”, “to find new friends” and “other” with a write-in text box. It was possible to choose several answers (up to 3).

One of the tasks of the questionnaire was to generalize the information about the most preferable area of volunteering to university students. So, undergraduates were asked about it. They were given the following response choices: “volunteer for helping Ukrainian Armed Forces”, “child/youth educational centres”, “sports activities”, “cultural activities”, “university clubs”, “health services”, “animal services” and “other” with a write-in text box. It was possible to choose several answers (up to 3).

Students were also asked what type of effect volunteering has on their: a) social growth; b) psychological development; c) moral development; d) academic learning (the response choices were “positive effect”, “no effect” or “negative effect”. It was possible to choose only one answer).

In addition, students were asked the following three open-ended questions: “In what ways has volunteering changed your life?”, “How volunteering has affected your academic success?” and “What is the main reason why students aren’t doing volunteer work nowadays?”

The questionnaire showed that 64,7% (n=121) respondents had volunteer experience before and 58,3% (n=109) respondents are current volunteers. The current volunteers reported an average several hours per month 60, 5% (n= 66), but 22,01% (n=24) students said that their volunteer work is occasional (“several hours per year”). 71, 9% (n=87) respondents with volunteer experience said that they do volunteer work on their own decision. And 33,05% (n=40) undergraduates answered that their volunteer work is related to their future profession.

In *Figure 1* students’ motivation for volunteering is shown.

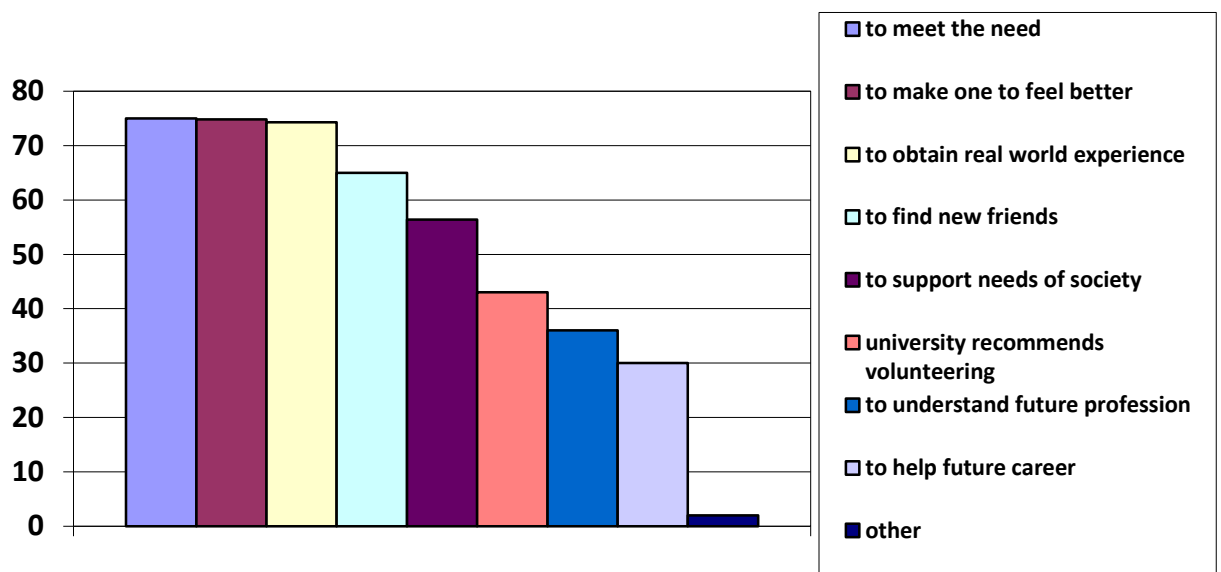


Figure 1. Students’ motivations to volunteer

Thus, the main motivation for volunteering was to meet the need, to make one to feel better and to obtain real world experience (approximately 75% (n=90)), followed by desire to find new friend (approximately 64 % (n=78)) and to support needs of society (approximately 56% (n=67)). The received results, however, were not significantly different between 1st –year students, 2nd – year students or 3rd – year students.

Among other motives for voluntary work students named altruistic, education-related and social motives such as the desire to spend time with their friends, to make the advertisement of their university/faculty, to receive academic bonuses, to test themselves in new activity, to understand their own problems, to motivate themselves

for the better future, to escape from their own problems and forget about one's fails, etc.

According to students' answers we can divide motivation aspects into five main areas: a) social growth; b) moral development; c) professional self-determination and future career support; d) academic success; e) psychological satisfaction.

The most preferable area of volunteering to students (n=187) is voluntary work in Ukrainian Armed Forces (81,8% (n=153)), university clubs (75,9 % (n=142)) and children/youth educational centres (73, 2% (n=137)), followed by voluntary work in animal services (46,5% (n=87), cultural services (33,1 % (n=62)) and sports (22,9% (n=43). Health services voluntary work occupied the last position of the list (14,4% (n=27)). This information is presented in *Figure 2*.

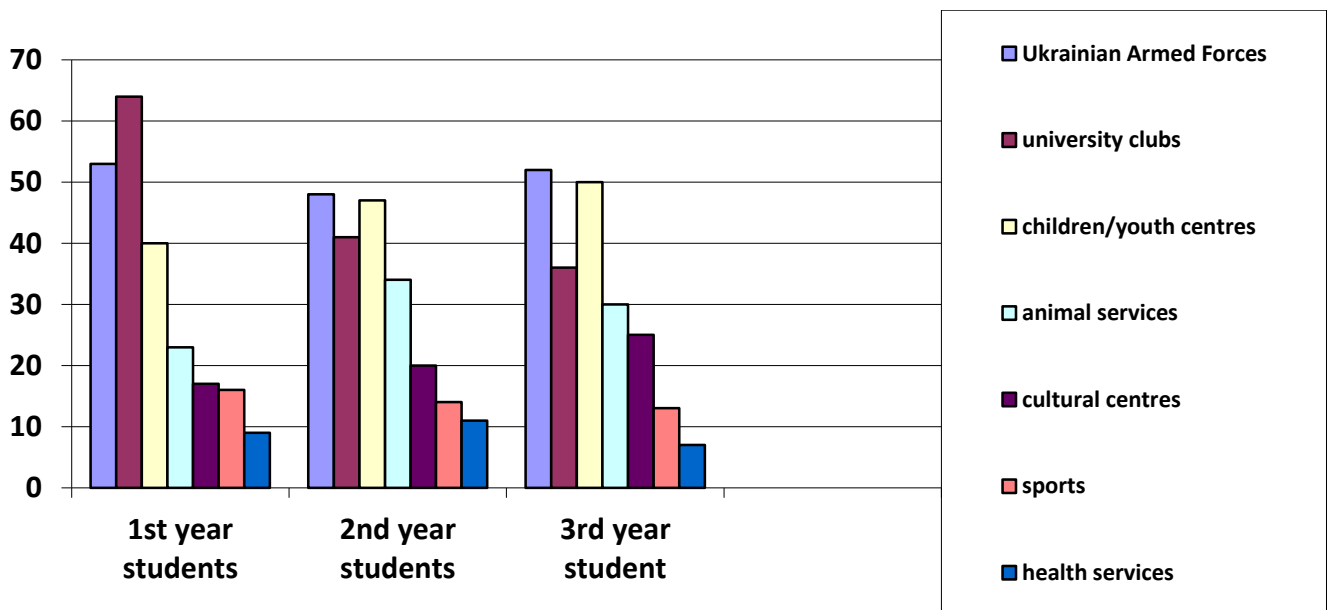


Figure 2. Area of volunteering

In responses to a question about how volunteering has affected their academic success, social growth, psychological and moral development indicated that volunteering raised or maintained their social and learning awareness as well as stimulated psychological and moral development. Only four students mentioned a

negative impact of volunteering on their academic success and six students said that volunteering has not affected their academic success or social growth at all.

A number of responses to the last open-ended questions focused on personal benefits of volunteering. These are some of them:

a) “Voluntary work helped me to learn about myself. It has discovered a whole range of personal qualities that I never knew. Volunteering has given me a chance to develop my inner world” (*3rd year student, male*);

b) “Volunteering has allowed me to understand my own strengths. Besides, it has allowed me to develop leadership skills. Finally, I have focused on personal values and empathy” (*1st year student, female*);

c) “Volunteering provided me with the possibility to meet new people that were completely differ from my friends and figure out what I am good or bad at. I became more organized and tolerant” (*2nd year student, male*);

d) “After doing voluntary work I became feel myself more confident. I think my engaging in volunteering led to positive changes of my worldview positions. It gave me the successful experience of teamwork” (*2nd year student, female*);

e) “Taking part in volunteering helps to develop your character and build your interpersonal skills. I sure, you help yourself at the same time as helping others. Voluntary work has given me an excellent opportunity to develop my personal skills, all of which will be valuable in my future life” (*3rd year student, female*).

Among the main reasons why university students aren't doing volunteer work are lack of time (93,5% (n=175)), lack of interest (82,3% (n=154)) and lack information about where to volunteer (78,6 % (n=147)).

Students also don't volunteer because they have lots of family responsibilities and duties (ones have relatives who need their physical help, others have to earn money to help their families, etc.) – 35,8% (n=67).

Some students say that they are not especially good at something (12,2 % (n=23)) whereas others don't volunteer because they haven't got any experience (10,6% (n=20)).

Other reasons why university students do not volunteer is because they are too lazy (5,5 % (n= 10)) or don't believe and understand the purpose of the voluntary project (2,6% (n=5)). Some of them even have a bad experience in their previous voluntary work (1,6% (n=3)), etc.

On a basis of empirical analysis we determined the main features of university student volunteering in Ukraine. Firstly, undergraduates are mostly involved in volunteer activity on their own decision but universities play an active role in this process as well. Secondly, nowadays Ukrainian universities provide different forms of volunteer activities and have special programs that supporting student volunteering movement. Thirdly, university student volunteering is oriented on development of a person: social, cultural, moral and spiritual, psychological, professional, personal, etc. Fourthly, modern students have volunteering experience. And they often start volunteering during their studying at universities. For some of them, voluntary work is a daily routine, for others, it is occasional activity. It is obvious that student volunteering experience is not always positive. There are cases when it is negative. Fifthly, "occasional volunteering" (when a person volunteers from time to time) is a popular trend among Ukrainian university students today. It attracts students due to flexibility of time. However, occasional volunteering is also available.

To summarize, university student volunteering is a modern trend in Ukrainian Higher Education. There are different types of volunteering activities that are spread among university students nowadays. The most preferable area of volunteering to students is voluntary work in Ukrainian Armed Forces, university clubs and children/youth educational centres. University student motives to volunteering are divided into five main areas: a) social growth; b) moral development; c) professional self-determination and future career support; d) academic success; e) psychological satisfaction. The results of the questionnaire showed that voluntary work has affected

positively on student social, professional and academic success. It helps in the development of communicative and cultural competence, intellectual activity, and exercises the ability to act in unconventional situations, etc.

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Стаття присвячена вивченню проблеми особливостей студентського волонтерства як сучасного тренду української системи вищої освіти. Волонтерська діяльність розглядається як невід'ємна частина соціального життя студентів і як ресурс позитивної соціалізації та кращого розуміння молоддю моделей політичного, економічного і соціального середовищ своєї країни. Мета статті – на засадах теоретичного аналізу й емпіричного дослідження узагальнити визначення поняття «студентське волонтерство» та проаналізувати особливості цього руху, а саме причини і мотивацію студентів до волонтерської роботи, найпоширеніші сфери і форми волонтерства, роль вищих навчальних закладів у цьому процесі тощо. У статті надано результати анкетування студентів 1–3 курсів навчання (2016 – 2017 рр.) щодо визначення їх ставлення до волонтерської роботи. На підставі емпіричного аналізу були виділені наступні риси українського студентського волонтерства, а саме: по-перше, його добровільний характер; по-друге, різноманітність форм і програм волонтерської діяльності, які організовуються/підтримуються українськими вищими навчальними закладами; по-третє, позитивний вплив волонтерської роботи на розвиток і становлення особистості студента як майбутнього спеціаліста – професіонала у певній суспільній галузі й активного члена суспільства; по-четверте, наявність багатой волонтерської практики у сучасних студентів. При чому, дуже часто вперше молодь залучається до волонтерства саме під час навчання у вищій школі; по-п'яте, студентська волонтерська діяльність носить як постійний, так і випадковий характер, тобто людина залучається до волонтерських заходів час від часу. Саме таке «випадкове» залучення набуває сьогодні популярності серед студентства. Характеризуючи основні форми і сфери розповсюдження студентського волонтерства, автори підкреслюють його позитивне значення для студентів, вищих навчальних закладів і суспільства в цілому, а також наголошують на необхідності всебічної підтримки цього руху як одного з найважливіших трендів української інноваційної вищої школи.

Ключові слова: *тренд, освітній тренд, волонтерство, студентське волонтерство, волонтерська діяльність, волонтерська робота*