Volunteering motivations of higher education students in a Cross-Border Central Eastern European Region

Valeria Markos

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Proposal information

In our research, we examine the frequency and distribution of volunteering of higher education students by country and discipline as well as what motivation types of volunteering which exist among students. We examine as well what kind of voluntary groups be formed among the higher education students.

According to researchers (Cnaan - Amrofell 1994, Wilson 2000, Dekker, Halman 2003, Handy et al. 2010) the volunteering has four specialty. These are the following: The activity is voluntary, non-obligatory, carried out by people’s own choice and free will. The voluntary work is free of charge, thus the paid work can be disqualify. Volunteering is producing material, intellectual goods or services for the benefit of others or for public good. Volunteering is usually done in an organizational context.

According to Czike and Bartal (2005) there are the traditional and modern type of volunteering. The traditional volunteering is characterized by altruistic values such as helping the poor, the importance of religion and faith, moral duty and belonging to the community. The modern type of volunteering is characterized by gaining work experience, personal growth challenge, career development, spending leisure time in a useful way and making new friends. According to Stefanescu & Osvat (2011) nowadays the motivations of volunteering among the young generation mostly instrumental (modern type of volunteering) such as important of making friends, meeting people with similar interest, spending leisure time, gaining information, developing and practicing...
skills, enlarging human capital, getting a job more easily, learning and practicing sports and cultural activities. But nowadays the mixed motivations are also appear among students, where helping others is also important for students with new motivations such as helping others is also important for the students with modern motivations. In addition according to Handy et al. (2010) turn up the new types of volunteering among higher education students. This is the career-related resume building volunteering for example, they do voluntary work, because they can put the experiences in their CVs. In Hungary the most popular volunteering areas are the followings; religious, leisure, recreational, healthcare, youth, educational, and cultural organizations. The traditional and modern type of volunteering are also common (Bartal 2010). According to the literature (Voicu and Voicu 2003, Praxton et al. 2014) the religiosity enlarges the chance of volunteering and the religious practice (eg. regular praying) has a positive effect on volunteering. The importance of helping others is more popular among religious people.

According to some researcher (Hesser, 1995; Eyler et al., 1997; Astin& Sax, 1998; Mabry, 1998) volunteering among higher education students is very important factor because it can be an indicator of student learning outcomes. Voluntary work has a positive effect on students’ academic achievement and it can develop competences that are necessary in the life for example active citizenship, decision making, leadership ambitions and facilities, social self-confidence, critical thinking development, problem-solving skills, analytical skills, interpersonal and communication skills, conflict resolution skills, team work skills, increased knowledge about other cultures and ethnicities, those personal values which help a better understanding the community, goals and attitudes changes, greater tolerance towards other groups and individual changes in social values.

Methods

Our research is based on the serial quantitative research conducted by the Hungarian Center for Higher Education Research and Development. Data were gathered in the border regions of four Central Eastern European countries, namely Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. We examined those Central European higher education institutions, which have high rate of non-traditional (low status, rural, minority) students.

The asked full-time students was state-funded and full fee-paying students. We asked the students at the beginning and the end of the training to reach all levels of training. We selected proportional sample from the institutions so the Hungarian sub-sample is bigger than the other cross-border Hungarian sub-sample. We asked 1792 students and we used the Institutional Effect on Students’ Achievement in Higher Education (IESA) database.

The examined variables were the following: Dependent: Have you been a volunteer during your university studies? If so, what motivated you (20items)?

Independent variables: the country of the higher education institution and disciplines.
To examine the motivation of volunteering we used 20-item Likert scale variable which is based on Clary et al. (1998) Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). Because of the length of questionnaire we should reduce the number of items to 20-s. According to the OECD we classify six disciplines groups, these are the followings: natural science, engineering and technology, medical and health sciences, agricultural sciences, social sciences, humanities.

To examine the research questions, quantitative data are used. We conducted the data-analysis with the SPSS program. We used cluster analyses and crosstabs.

**Conclusion**

According to our results the majority of students in our sample has mixed motivation (traditional and modern types of motivates were also important). We formed five student volunteer groups by cluster analysis, these are the followings: (1) postmodern, (2) weak altruistic dismotivated, (3) eminent, (4) volunteers of antivolunteering climate and (5) the helping new type of volunteers. Most of the students belonged to the “volunteers of antivolunteering climate” group. This group is important to help others, but also important them their own professional development, gaining experience and ability enrichment. They did not want to put this voluntary activity in the CV. The reason of this could be, that in Central-Eastern Europe the employers are not interested in that what voluntary work experiences has the young people, when they go to a job interview - as much as in western countries. The volunteering helps to enter to the labour market to the young people and they need this because of the high unemployment rate in Central and Eastern Europe.

Among the disciplines the “volunteers of antivolunteering climate” group is outstanding in each discipline. The rate of those students who learn natural sciences and those students who learn agricultural sciences are also high in the so called “weak altruistic dismotivated” group. The reason of this could be that these students are not keep in touch with humans during their studies and they deal with natural phenomena or agricultural activities which are not necessarily focus on the people. So these students try to help to people in their free time.

**Keywords:** volunteering, higher education, volunteering motivations

**References**


