Volunteerism: A Practical Type of Education for Enabling Development of Societal Abilities. A Literature Review

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Abstract
This paper summarizes several aspects of volunteerism and its important traits for an ongoing societal development. Every society has its interests, but most of them only would like to obtain a harmonically demarche for a better evolution and social progression. There are many actors involved in volunteerism, however in this paper there will be taken for discussion (mostly) the relating connections between the volunteer and the society. The volunteerism area is analysed (in the capacity of the author) and is described (shortly) through the “eye” of its utility. Volunteerism’s utility puts an emphasis on intrinsic motivations (from the volunteers point of view) and afterwards in extrinsic motivations (from a society’s point of view). Its idea of involvement is highly desirable, in this paper being described why, how and when.

Key words: volunteerism, volunteer, NGO, community, abilities, Service Civique

1. Introduction
Volunteerism is one of the most desirable type of activity in order to achieve a completely formed-education basis, especially while the formal education doesn’t have all the necessary tools for creating an “experiential” kind of environment for fully-inhabiting concepts such as “personal development” for “professional development” and not only specifically for this scope. “The educational system doesn’t provide a palette wide enough to accommodate all the variables of the labour market” (Corduban, Dumitrascu, Nica & Gafiuc, 2014, p. 286). In agreement, with the previous statement, comes the social creation of the “volunteerism” notion. Although the aforementioned affirmation could be validated through numerous statistics from different countries, the public educational formal system in European Union does have the possibility to incorporate its activities and transcend them (at a certain level of course) into development of practical abilities much coveted by the society’s own created demands. Having the above arguments, we could say that societal engagement for development has a more interest for appealing its necessity for involvement, in the young people social category (Lough & Sherraden, 2012).

This paper wants to present volunteerism as a very well organized type of activity which, involving in its demarche, could provide necessary development of skills for an individual. It could, as well, provide solutions to a society who is prepared to take in all the help it needs, for its interest is having a harmonically way of social atmosphere. Programs that provide services for communities could be identified as: senior service, faith-based service and youth service and from these three, the most common one is shown by the youth service (Pitner, 2007). This paper succeeds in providing a simple-sample-type, but a good practice to be taken in kind of program, implemented by France.

2. Volunteerism for community’s interest
Non-formal education begun to have an increasing interest in the private spheres of the systems in which it could develop substantial facades for new methods to learn and assimilate knowledge. These systems could be grasped by those with the potential resources to spend on this type of education such as NGOs, companies, firms, even corporates and public institutions. “Education is fundamental to individual freedom and empowerment […] Education is essential to creating a society that is more equitable” (Lisney & Krylova, 2018, p.68). Therefore education is highly important when
it comes about teaching the next generations the usefulness of contributing to one’s society, hence it provides the possibility of its evolution.

Non-governmental organisations (NGO) have their importance in the process of providing quality volunteering services through a proper involvement of volunteer and well organized activities for developing a society’s future heritage for the next generations. NGOs appositeness and relevance in the social field help towards deciding for sharing time and energy by adding as well as resources needed for situational necessities by the local (at least) organizations and institutions (private and public), as well as for adding value for it by community’s citizens. NGOs “play a significant role in supporting [...] a wide range of civic service programs such as volunteering, community development, and community service programs” (Patel & Wilson, 2004, p. 30S). NGOs “fight” (through volunteerism and all their involvement in programs by creating projects for immediate implementation) against „general poverty, underdevelopment, poor or fragile economic, political and resource governance, environmental degradation, health, peace and security, and fragile social systems” (Caprara, Mati, Obadare & Perold, 2012, p. 5). Learning through serving the community into the vide palette of activities through NGOs, help increase societal-self-created aptitudes and benefits of youth in areas such as personal effectiveness (proving capability for evolvement), self-respect (putting an emphasis on proper self-pride and increasing one’s dignity), credence in one’s self (including the manifestation of skills needed in interacting with the social environment) and enhancing the competence to construct positive-conclusive-stable relationships with other people (Conrad & Hedin, 1982, 1991; Furco, 1994; Giles & Eyler, 1998; Arenas, Bosworth & Kwandayi, 2006). The presence of these abilities expand societal knowledge and its harmony spreads easily in the state of mind of all the generations about to come, because mentality is passed on in social waves.

The programs with offering services at a social level (and not only) could have “win-win” benefits for both those who are helped through volunteering initiatives and those who offer the provision of help (Sherraden & Eberly, 1982; Wheeler, Gorey & Greenblatt, 1998; Moore McBride, Benitez & Danso, 2003). Volunteerism, as this type of a program, is a “must” type of activity in any society, because is a practical way of being in a close relationship with the community, by the community, for the community (Huda, Jasmi, Alas, Qodriah, Dacholfany et.al, 2017); the community being composed by its members first of all.

Volunteering could be resembled as an integrated part of the social capital domain since it signifies: ”networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits” (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). The whole system of volunteering is based on implementing organized activities, creation of relationships, encouraging participation and involvement in cooperation between different parties. This social capital of volunteerism could aspire in: providing working experience for obtaining desirable jobs (Lin, 2001), helping the economic system evolve (Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995) and contributing to increasing the level of formal education (Helliwell & Putnam, 1999). Therefore volunteerism is an exquisite domain of interest for a community, despite the community’s economical evolution. Volunteerism will always be a point of interest in engaging citizens towards creating a sufficient developed social capital for assuring all needs of an always changing society.

3. Volunteerism – “incubator” of abilities

„Access to Basic Knowledge also has a strong and significant relationship with dimensions of Basic Human Needs and Opportunity, as well as individual components” (Lisney & Krylova, 2018, p. 106). It is vital for individuals to have the chance to enhance their formal education (or in case of non-experimentation in the formal system, the informal education, as well). Through volunteering young people could “continue to learn throughout their lives” (Hamilton & Fenzel, 1998, p. 65) and in this way it is most obviously they will not only gather all the knowledge and experiences they need in order to have a fruitful way of living, but also have the opportunity to influence other people’s lives through their way of involvement and enthusiastic attitude. It is important for youth to be able to notice or to realize what necessities they can accomplish in their community, because this way they can assure a proper societal demarche (Șimon, 2007; Șimon, 2018). The necessity of both volunteer’s and
society’s involvement are highly desirable since their contributions could be resembled with covering the basic needs such as the ones being, in a figurative speaking kind of description, inside one’s body: „the body needs air, water, warmth, movement, communication etc.” (Șimon, 2008). Just like the body needs attention, involvement, appreciation, caring and respect, both volunteer and society by providing these to one another, a natural and well-established relationship occur.

Volunteering in not a type of activity that is pursuit by every individual. Therefore there has to be certain inner desires to do. Even curiosity could be a trigger of experimenting volunteerism. However, usually the inner motivations describe an important personal part of personality in completion of one’s way of being and his interests or altruism tendencies. Some of these traits could be described as selflessness (the ability to put other before himself), societal aware (being concerned of the society’s needs), embracing relationships of helping between strangers, managing the personality and cultural diversity, expressing empathy (Dekker, 2009) and many other. These traits encourage a young person to establish well organized mind-ideas for what is the purpose and the outcome of an education, such as it is highlighting a meaningful scope for all those involved, not to mention in nuancing the end results of the likelihood of a place for working (Perry, 2004). Those influenced by the main stable-volunteers, manage to “experience a positive sense of cohesion through civic services project” (Cossetta, 2010, p. 10), therefore they receive a “bait”-opportunity towards self-development for their better judgmental process and awareness of involvement’s for common good-positive societal results.

While discussing about influences, we cannot dismiss the main influence of a youngster, besides the one coming from the societal environment. Indeed it is important how and what he manages to emanate around him, but more important is what he receives first, in order to emanate something useful. In this conception we must mention the importance of families’ and friends’ contribution over the young volunteer and his gathered primordial abilities for public usage (Rusu & Maidaniuc, 2016). Because their influence is highly visualized in the adult’s life, volunteerism could encourage to either develop what the youngster received or re-evaluate himself and recreate himself in order to comply with the social surroundings. Nonetheless, volunteers’ personalities are diverse and even in the same family, having the same informal education within it, a youngster could be completely different, mainly because of several particularities being present such as “life interactions with other people, situations and state of mind” (Rusu, 2016, p. 127). Despite the influences a young person receives, during one’s volunteering life (no matter how long this period is established by a person) questions addressed to either himself or to those around him are answered with more or less satisfactory arguments. Uncertainties regarding motivations for participation in volunteering activities could include the following: “is it because they need a purpose for spending their time in a useful way; is it because they need a certain practice with a social category that could help them unveil what to do in the close future; probably it’s because they want affirmations from others or confirmations of doing something good for someone or for the society; or maybe just because they would like to enlarge their friendships” (Rusu, 2017, p. 749); is it necessary for spending time and effort on societal demands of needs; how does the society influence him and how can he do that towards the society as well; and many other. These questions have the chance to receive answers by the volunteer, during his stage of volunteering and therefore he can gain self-awareness towards enabling useful societal abilities.

3. Enabling practical societal abilities through “Service Civique”

Shortly there will be described a projectable idea for experimenting the enablement of practical societal abilities through non-formal education such as volunteerism, in a given context by France: “Service Civique” Volunteering Program. From the knowledge researched and gathered above, through this paper, the author would like to describe an idea for a possible way of volunteering in an exquisite manner offered by France. The program that will be shortened described is called “Service Civique” (Civic Service) and it is addressed to its citizens only. This programme, from the author’s point of view, is a perfectly eligible programme to be copied for implementing by other countries, in order to encourage their citizens in excelling at societal participation and their implication in solving the needs obviously nuanced in the society’s life by media and among people. Engaging in the civic
service could be likened as an enrolment in a type of citizenship which involves active participation of individuals with proper and personal time self-distribution and usage of energy for the benefit of the community (Perry, 2004; Nieves, 2004; Douglas & Brandt, 2009; Zach & Wahrman, 2014).

Service Civique (this name of the French program will be used here in order to enhance its authenticity) is a program of a voluntary commitment in the service of the general interest, open to all young people (French residents), between ages of 16 and 25, extended up to 30 years for young people with disabilities, without a diploma requirement (therefore only skills and motivations count) (“Qu’est-ce que le Service Civique?”, n.d.). The program offers the possibility to accomplish a “mission” in France or abroad, during a previously established period of time (between 6-12 months), in 9 proposed domains: culture and leisure, international development and humanitarian action, education for all, environment, emergency and crisis relief, remembrance and citizenship, health, solidarity and sports (“The Civic Service”, n.d.; Cossetta, 2010).

Taking in consideration for analysis a few testimonials (“The Testimonials”, n.d.) displayed (in form of interviews) on the Service Civique Agency’s website, there are a few conclusions with which we could highlight and recognize the importance of experimenting volunteerism:

• bringing different desired experiences in specific domains, either experimented before or not, such as business, accompaniment towards autonomy, teaching;
• enhancing several abilities: autonomy, patience, social opening, teaching, raising self-confidence, master technologies;
• discovering vocations: realizing the domain in which a youngster would like to continue pursuing in the near future or study further on;
• widen one’s network;
• engaging with categories of people that an individual normally doesn’t interact with and discovering ways to understand each other.

If every country would have programs as such, the youth of a nation would empower a society’s demarche to excel and advance in all aspects.

Conclusions

Volunteerism could be taken at many levels when we are talking about the advantages that it brings in a needful reality, either we are talking about personal or professional development (for volunteers), economical evolution through social capital (for societies) or helping exceed a life-type kind of obstacle (for beneficiaries). It enables improvement in the social skills of an individual, while the society manages to create a proper environment for experimenting different situations and covers the necessary needs by providing the right kind of resources. All implemented programs and project that take in consideration volunteerism as a mandatory or important type of activity could only help everything around progress towards better living conditions, happier individuals and safe environmental context.

References


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