

Volunteering opportunities in higher education

Mónika FODOR-GARAI Phd.habil.

OBUDA UNIVERSITY KAROLY KELETI FACULTY
OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY
fodor.monika@kgk.uni-obuda.hu

Janos VARGA Phd.

OBUDA UNIVERSITY KAROLY KELETI FACULTY OF BUSINESS
AND MANAGEMENT, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Agnés CSISZARIK-KOCSIR Phd.habil.

OBUDA UNIVERSITY KAROLY KELETI FACULTY OF BUSINESS
AND MANAGEMENT, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Abstract

In this paper I present the results of empirical research and practical pilot programmes carried out in the frame of an international project. The project was about the promotion of pro bono activities among university students, involving corporate experts and non-profit companies. The conclusions of the research and the pilot programmes implemented over two years, several of which were digitally implemented during the covid period, show that young people are open to volunteering and willing to participate in well-organised and prepared pro bono activities. For higher education institutions, integrating pro bono into the curricular portfolio is an excellent way to increase the practicality of education, strengthen business links and, last but not least, increase young people's social awareness. The particular value of the pro bono activities carried out digitally during the covid period is how the volunteer programme was able to adapt to the challenges

of the virus situation and how it was able to successfully implement pro bono programmes in the online space, involving corporate professionals, non-profit grantees and academic experts. The conclusions could be useful for professionals in higher education as well as for non-profit organisations on how to make knowledge-sharing pro bono activities work to the benefit of all stakeholders.

Introduction

The international volunteering programme “Boosting Employability and Empowering Social Engagement in High Education through Pro Bono”, which is presented in the context of the study, is all about engaging students in higher education in volunteering.

This is a tripartite partnership between university, NGO and for-profit companies.

There were several reasons for the institution to join the programme: firstly, to motivate students to volunteer and to promote social responsibility.

At the same time, the university had human policy and employer branding reasons for participating in the programme: we place a strong emphasis on people-centred education in our institution. It is important for us that our students are sensitive and responsible people who are aware of social and environmental issues.

In the service of this objective, we have joined the international programme, which has given us the opportunity to involve students in CSR activities, thus strengthening their social awareness.

The programme has enabled us to open up the university’s contacts with NGOs and to promote the educational institution among the players in the egg market.

Pro bono is a voluntary activity based on the sharing of professional knowledge. The students who joined the programme put the knowledge they had acquired at the university to good use by receiving professional guidance from their teachers and business professionals.

The programme has been beneficial for the students: it has allowed them to put their theoretical knowledge into practice while serving a socially beneficial purpose. It also helped to promote pro bono activities and the pro bono spirit among young people. Thus strengthening their social awareness.

The programme has also benefited the university by expanding its network of corporate and non-profit professional contacts. It has contributed to social values, strengthening its reputation and the commitment of its students to the university.

Other beneficiaries of the activity were the NGOs supported, as they received free professional support such as market research, website development and marketing communication campaigns.

The companies that provided the professional supervisors were also able to use their participation in the programme to enhance their reputation. In addition, all corporate partners confirmed that such pro bono, CSR activities play a huge role in increasing the loyalty of their employees. So from an HR point of view, the programme is also very beneficial for them. Last but not least, they also had an excellent opportunity to recruit by getting to know the work of the students involved in the programme. Selecting the most motivated and talented students.

Literature review

In modern societies, volunteering is a form of civic activity. It can be considered effective when volunteering is organically linked to a local community or a wider area association and is widely represented by a range of organisations. (Mirsafian - Mohamedinejad, 2012). The International Labour Organization (ILO) has attempted to summarise the benefits of volunteering in a lengthy study. The ILO mentions that it can not only have economic effects, but can also bring significant benefits to society or to the volunteers themselves. It can provide access to the workforce and a framework for employment. Volunteering can contribute to development goals. It can also result in services in the form of employment that a paid worker would not be able to provide. It also enhances social solidarity, social capital, political legitimacy and quality of life in society. Volunteering can help to promote social inclusion and integration (ILO, 2011). In addition to the above, volunteering can also bring other benefits. According to a study by Owen and Celik (2018), activities such as volunteering can contribute to our mental health, thus strengthening the development of a healthy society (Owen - Celik, 2018). Mundle and co-authors echo the previous idea. Volunteering has been associated with positive health and well-being outcomes for those who undertake it (Mundle et al, 2012). Several other studies have demonstrated that many of those who volunteered experienced lower depression, higher mental wellbeing and satisfaction (Same et al, 2020). According to Morrow and co-authors (2003), older people who volunteer or are still working may have better mental health characteristics, demonstrating that volunteering has a positive impact on mental health (Morrow - Howell, 2003; Morrow - Howell, 2010). Stukas et al. argue that volunteering, social contribution and voluntary physical assistance improve quality of life. They argue that basic activities in people's lives would be disrupted if they were not volunteers.

And volunteering means giving pleasure not only to others, but also to oneself, as the volunteer derives satisfaction and pleasure from their work (Willems et al., 2020). Individuals can also volunteer in public or other roles to enhance their

role in society. Juknevičius-Savicka (2003) also links volunteering to our role in society. It is an activity that we do for our environment without remuneration, but in return we receive moral recognition and appreciation (Wilson, 2000). The latter can motivate us to undertake such tasks (Paine et al., 2010).

Volunteering requires a certain level of human, cultural and social capital from the individual. (Wilson -Musick, 1997). According to this formulation, volunteering is indeed a measure of the state of society. Where there is no social capital, the level of volunteering cannot be high. However, it does not matter whether we look at the individual or the organisational level (Czike - Kuti, 2006; Perpák, 2017). Organisations tend to turn to volunteering more often, especially in their CSR projects. Steven Howlett mentions that businesses are also consciously turning towards volunteering. Organisations want to know which aspects of their work can be affected by volunteering (Howlett, 2004). More widely, organisations and companies are expected to do something for their immediate environment. Volunteering by individuals is mostly confined to the aforementioned giving. In the so-called World's Most Generous Countries Report published by Gallup, it is reported that although many people in Hungary give to charitable causes, our country still gives below average (Gallup, 2018).

Methodology

One of the outputs of the BEESe pro bono Erasmus programme was an international survey among students from the universities participating in the KA2 project. We conducted an online survey with a structured questionnaire.

The research investigated the openness of young people to pro bono activities, what they know about this form of volunteering and how and to what extent they can be encouraged to engage in CSR activities.

The recruitment of the subjects in each sampling unit was done by a snowball sampling procedure, which resulted in 840 evaluable questionnaires in Hungary.

The research instrument was the same in all countries participating in the project for future comparability. The standardised questionnaire contained only closed questions, nominal measurement levels - single- and multiple-choice selective questions - and a ranking type of question, and a Likert scale was used to assess the respondents' attitudes and value orientation towards volunteering. Attitudes towards volunteering were analysed in a triple relation: cognitive, affective and conative phases, in order to get a more accurate picture of the homogeneity of the attitude components and of the possible cognitive dissonance. For the scaling questions, a scale from 1 to 7 was used in order to obtain more differentiated results and also because of the international character of the research, as there

were Portuguese, Spanish, French and Bulgarian participants, an internationally accepted scale had to be chosen. (Malhotra - Simon, 2017).

Results, discussion

The results showed that the majority of subjects do not know what the term pro bono means. However, those who had heard of it showed a clearly positive attitude.

The results of the research showed that young people are absolutely open to pro bono activities, but they still need information, education and, last but not least, a mentor to encourage participation. An instructor or a company expert who can help them in their work and give them direction.

The main motivation for them to take part in pro bon activities is to belong to a community, to fulfil themselves and to develop themselves.

The research also looked at the most effective communication channels to get the message of a knowledge-based volunteering campaign across to young people. The results show that the main sources of information about the conditions for participating in a pro bono volunteering programme are, according to the respondents, recommendations and opinions of friends and family, shares on social media platforms they visit, and social media platforms of non-profit organisations promoting such programmes.

The highest proportion of the sample (42.2%) were those who had not yet participated in a volunteering programme but would like to try it. They were followed by young people (39.9%) who had already volunteered and would be happy to do so again.

The smallest group (17.%) had a negative attitude towards volunteering: they had never participated in a volunteering programme and would not like to join one.

Among those who had volunteered in their lifetime, the most popular were children's programmes (30.4%), programmes helping animals and programmes supporting people in need (homeless) (26%). This was followed in order by programmes targeting local, local problems (16.8%), programmes targeting global problems (8.4%) and others such as volunteering in student organisations and student councils (2%).

Based on the results, it was thought that a strategically well-constructed education campaign and emotional messages that reinforce motivation would be the most effective way to attract young people with immature values. Rather than being socially insensitive or self-centred, their lack of motivation can be explained by a lack of a mature value orientation.

There is a large body of literature suggesting that young people's value orientation is more easily influenced, that they are easily won over by a good reference person, if only because they are characterised by a relatively strong social networking loss and seek out communities to join. And such communities can strongly influence young people's value judgements. (Töröcsik, 2017; Tari, 2011)

Limitation, Conclusion

As a continuation of the programme, the Eastern Faculty will continue to offer students the opportunity to carry out pro bono activities in the form of project work.

We would like to expand both the programme and the research in cooperation with other universities by involving international students.

We believe that one of the limitations of the research carried out on the Hungarian sample is the sample, as it focused on Hungarian students and Generation Z.

We think that it is worthwhile to extend the research to other generations, younger and older, and to include foreign students studying in our country among the sample. We believe that the perception of CR activities and pro bono activities is also culturally determined.

By broadening the scope of the research and including foreign students in the pro bono programme, we have the opportunity to promote the need and importance of social responsibility as widely as possible. We believe that it is important to orient students towards ethical behaviour and values and to strengthen their sense of community. In my experience, this kind of activity is a major contribution to graduates taking this ethos forward as employees and possibly as managers.

References

- Czike, K., & Kuti, É. (2006): Önkéntesség, jótékonyág, társadalmi integráció, Nonprofit Kutatócsoport és Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány, Budapest
- Dekker, P., & Halman, L (ed.) *The values of volunteering: Cross-cultural perspectives*. (pp 217-142), New York Kluwer Academic - Plenum Publishers
- Gallup (2018): The 2018 world's most generous countries report, Understanding the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of people around the world <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/245165/worlds-most-generous-countries-2018.aspx> letöltve: 2020.06.12.
- Howlett, S. (2004): Volunteering and mental health: a literature review. *Voluntary Action*, 6(2)
- International Labour Office (2011): Manual on the measurement of volunteer work, Geneva, Switzerland.
- International Labour Office (2011): Manual on the measurement of volunteer work, Geneva, Switzerland.

- Juknevičius, S., & Savicka, A. (2003): *From restitution to innovation. Volunteering in post-communist countries.*
- Malhotra Naresh, K. - Simon J.: *Marketingkutató*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2017, 289-296. p. 831.
- Mirsafian, H., & Mohamadinejad, A. (2012): Sport volunteerism: a study on volunteering motivations in university students. *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*, 7(1), 73-84.
- Morrow-Howell, N., Hinterlong, J., Rozario, P.A., & Tang, F. (2003): Effects of volunteering on the well-being of older adults. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 58(3), 137-145.
- Mundle, C., Naylor, C., & Buck, D. (2012): Volunteering in health and care in England. A summary of key literature. The KingsFund. https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_related_document/volunteering-in-health-literature-review-kingsfund-mar13.pdf, letöltve: 2020.07.01.
- Owen, F.K., & Celik N.D. (2018): Lifelong healthy lifestyle and wellness. *Current approaches in psychiatry*; 10(4), 440-453. <https://doi.org/10.18863/pgy.364108>
- Paine, E., Hill, M., & Rochester, C. (2010): Revisiting the question: 'what exactly is volunteering?' *Working paper series: Paper one. Institute for volunteering research*
- Same, A., McBride, H., Liddelow, C., Mullan, B., & Harris, C. (2020): Motivations for volunteering time with older adults: A qualitative study. *Pone Journals*, 5(15). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232718>
- Tari A. (2011): *Z generáció*, (pp. 35-48) Tercium Könyvkiadó, Budapest
- Töröcsik M. (2017): *Self-marketing*, (pp.62-78) Akadémiai Kiadó Budapest
- Willems, R., Vuijk, P. & Bohlmeijer, E. (2020): Impact of crisis line volunteering on mental wellbeing and the associated factors: A systematic review. *The environmental research and public health*, 17(5), 1641. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17051641>
- Wilson, J. (2000): Volunteering. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2, 215-240.
- Wilson, J., & Musick, M. A. (1997): Who cares? Toward an integrated theory of volunteer work, *American Sociological Review* 62, 694–713.