

”Learning through Service and Volunteerism”

The pedagogical Model in Higher Education in Finland in Degree Programme in Social Services

Abstract: *This paper explores the voluntary work course (internship) in higher education, in Social Services Programme. It explores the learning outcomes of a course called “Internship in Voluntary Work” (five credits). The paper presents “The Pedagogical Model of Learning Volunteerism” that the course is based on. The paper also utilizes research of student learning outcomes of the course. Research questions are “What did you learn from volunteer work (internship)?” and “What do you think is the significance of volunteer work?” The data were collected during 2016-2017 and it included 134 participants (n=134). The data were analyzed with content analysis. The findings from the analysis of a digital self-evaluation form shows that students consider volunteer work (Internship) very significant not only for the society but also for their own learning and professional development. It seems to offer a possibility to learn wider skills and abilities than the curriculum shows. According to the results, the findings also shown, those students’ have learned many meta- and transversal skills (Heckman & Kautz 2012; Rodin & Levy 2015) during the internship.*

Key words: *”Learning through Service and Volunteerism”, volunteer work, internship in higher education, Service Learning*

1. Introduction

This paper looks at voluntary work course (internship) in higher education, in Social Services Programme. It explores the learning outcomes of a course called “Internship in Voluntary Work” (5 credits). Even though the course is mainly for Social Services students, the course has been open also for students of other fields more e.g. physiotherapy, occupational therapy, music, midwifery, primary care, medical care, and information technology degrees. The course is open for them, and they get credits for it. To support the discussion, the paper utilizes case studies of students who took part in the course. ”Learning through Service

and Volunteerism” - The pedagogical Model in Higher Education in Finland in Social Services programme will be presented in this paper. The model is easy to implement in different types or levels of schools, from secondary school level to higher education, like university level. This paper looks at the course from pedagogical, but also from the learning outcome perspective. There are many benefits of the co-operation related to voluntary activities, but also some challenges. According Grönlund (2015) there is evidence that Volunteer Work increases volunteers’ well-being (see also Borgonovi 2008; Musick & Wilson 2003, p. 259).

In Finland, according to the latest studies, like Economy study, women do more voluntary work than men do. Voluntary work has been done mostly with young people and children with hobbies, like gym or culture. There is a difference between professional work and Volunteering work: the starting point of volunteering work is not based on problems, like it is in professional work (Falk 2015). Still, volunteering work will even replace professional work (Tuurnas 2016). This is one point, why it has been important for students to get an experience also from volunteering work, where it is possible to have interaction with people without the pressure of making interventions or offering traditional “professional support” -- it enables different kinds of dialogue and collaboration. It offers a different perspective to learn other skills or attitudes as well as personal skills and abilities. These skills are more transversal skills or meta-skills, like emotional or communicational skills or decision-making skills (Heckman & Kautz 2012; Rodin & Levy 2015). This is important at the modern digital times, when emotional intelligence and self-efficiency skills are more and more needed in the changing and complex global world.

2. Why Combine Studies with Voluntary Activities?

Generally, several studies have shown that combining formal studies with volunteering has various positive effects. These include the development of the students’ thinking and empathy, an increase in their cultural sensitivity and a build-up in their personality. Furthermore, it leads towards a deeper commitment to social issues, development in life skills, and an improvement in self-efficacy and accountability (Warren 2012). The combining of voluntary work and studies also increases student engagement and motivation for studying a certain topic. In addition, voluntary activities as a learning process allow people to combine their

academic studies with civic activities (Seifer & Connors 2007). Learning through Service and Volunteerism has many advantages:

1. It helps to achieve deeper learning outcomes as the students are more committed and have greater interest towards the themes, which they experience through voluntary work.
2. in the context of voluntary work (the community), it is easier for the students to memorize the things they have been studying.
3. Learning is closely related to students' personal values. Volunteering has a real impact on people's lives (Eyler – Giles 1999).

In addition, a student's experiences as a volunteer strongly support their professional growth. In order to obtain it, the person in question needs a fair knowledge of their own personality, emotions and ways of reacting to things. This type of self-knowledge constructs a personalized, yet professional approach to work, and the volunteering experiences play a significant role in structuring it. (Manninen & Raatikainen 2014).

There are many benefits of the co-operation related to voluntary activities. For community members' benefits of co-operation means, that it makes environmental issues more visible for others in society. In addition, it influences for raising awareness of the phenomenon and increasing interaction with external parties are good examples of benefits of cooperation. For educational institutions, it can offer gaining current social and regional information on society, enhancing knowledge of the conditions of expertise in voluntary work or improving students' learning results in practical environments. For the coordinating organizations cooperation for voluntary activities with higher education (and all school levels) cooperation can offer new development perspectives from students, introducing new members to participate in voluntary activities or for example strengthening civil society and social influence. Cooperation is meaningful for students also, because it makes it possible for them to combine academic studies and active citizenship, develop dialogue skills for developing an authentic learning environment, problem-solving skills, one's sense of responsibility, initiative taking and motivation through concrete action and development of one's values and identity. (Manninen & Raatikainen 2014).

3. How did we end up with the definition "Learning through Service and Volunteerism"?

"Learning through Service and Volunteerism" - Pedagogical Model was developed during years 2014-2015 in one project. After that, the model was tested in practice with Social Services students in Metropolia University of Applied of Sciences, and further developed in 2015-2017. "The roots of Service Learning are in the 1960s, and the model is based on John Dewey's (1933; 1938) idea of experimental education. Dewey's perspective was educational and social psychological and it emphasized experiential learning and citizenship. In addition to Dewey's thoughts, other movements such as feminist pedagogy have influenced the development of this perspective. This can for example be seen in its way of questioning existing power structures and seeing education as an opportunity towards a fairer society. In terms of its background, Service Learning is also influenced by the critical school of thought, according to which the political power of education is relevant and makes it possible to achieve a more equal society". (Manninen & Raatikainen 2014).

In the background of Service Learning thinking is thus an experiential learning model. It differs from the traditional model of experiential learning (Kolb 1984) in that it emphasizes reciprocal learning between different parties, societally relevant activities (community) as well as a structured learning experience. Root of the Service Learning is Hull House in the late 1800s (Jane Adams), (Flecky & Gitlow 2012, p. 5). As a process, Service Learning is also a dynamic model binding and benefitting all parties involved. In this way, both the education provider (for example, in terms of changes in educational content and curricula) and the volunteering organization (e.g. developing their own operations based on feedback) will react to changes. The key point is that all underlying values are common and shared. (Flecky & Gitlow 2012). The elements of a successful Service Learning process are (see Basics of Service Learning, n.d.): (1) *active participation*, (2) *caring and* (3) *community building* (Manninen & Raatikainen 2014).

From Service Learning thinking for The Pedagogical Model of Learning Volunteerism, has been developed during years 2015-2017 as a part of the projected. In the project students worked as "buddies" for younger students with learning disabilities. During the project, pedagogy of service learning was tested and

evaluated. In the end of the project the new pedagogical model was created. There were many arguments to create a new Pedagogical Model of Learning Volunteerism. Mainly social pedagogical way of thinking offered a way for the change. The curriculum is based on a Socio-pedagogical framework. More differences between the two models are listed in the picture.

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Table 1. From the differences to the Pedagogical Model of Learning Service and Volunteerism (Manninen & Raatikainen 2014).

4. Structure of the course/implementation of the course in practice

At Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, voluntary training (5 credits) is part of the curriculum in the Bachelor's Degree in Social Services. The aim of the Voluntary training is to enable students to use empowering socio-pedagogical methods when working with clients. Learning outcomes are promoting justice, human rights and equality. The goal is also to support students to use empowering socio-pedagogical methods when working with clients. Volunteer activities emphasize the basic principles in social pedagogy such as highlighting the importance of the community as a part of human well-being and inclusion. The course (5 credits) includes three parts:

- Part: 1.** Orientation: (a.) The orientation of voluntary activities, info session at school and (b.) Independent orientation: literature-based task, personal goals and a plan of voluntary cooperation. (An orientation and assessment of learning is 35 hours). (See picture 2. yellow sign).
- Part: 2.** Practical Training: Voluntary activities / organization (in addition to the potential volunteer training offered the organization). (100 hours of volunteering, a minimum of 20 hours /per place. Voluntary work can be done once a week or intensively for a longer period, such as summer camp or on weekends).
- Part: 3.** Evaluation and closing of the training: Learning and self-assessment skills (e-survey). Often, the training in voluntary training is carried out in the second year of studies – a time when the social principles of pedagogical activity have been sufficiently studied in both theory and practice (i.e. during the first work placement). Internship can be e.g. civic activity, voluntary work or acting as a support person. It can be started after the first year of studies and is mainly done during the second year of studies. (Manninen & Raatikainen 2014).

Assessment of Learning based on a digital self-evaluation form (e-questionnaire). Students get a passing grade, when they have submitted the following learning assignments, based on steps 1. - 3. (See picture 2): a.) Orientation Task (submitted in Moodle workspace before starting voluntary work in the target organization) b.) Implementation Plan for Voluntary Work (an agreement with the collaboration organization, submitted in Moodle workspace within two weeks of starting voluntary work), c.) Working Hour Record for voluntary work.

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Figure 1. Pedagogical Model of Learning through Service and Volunteerism

Education and training in Social Services are based on nationally defined areas of expertise. According to them, the know-how of Bachelors of Social Services consists of the following areas: ethical competence in social services, communication and social skills, guidance skills, inclusiveness and social criticism, a good command of research and development, as well as working environment competence and management skills (Degree programme in Social Services: Curriculum 2014). In the learning gained through volunteering, the emphasis particularly lies on the students' ethical competencies, their communication and interpersonal skills, as well as their participatory and critical social competencies and professional appreciation. (Degree programme in Social Services: Curriculum 2014)

5. Methodology

This paper made use of an e-questionnaire form (quality research). There were over 20 claims and many open questions in the self-evaluation form (e-questionnaire). Research question 1. Research question 2. (See above) was also an open question. Research questions are:

1. *“What did you learn from volunteering work (internship)?”*
2. *“What do you think is the significance of volunteering work?”*

Data were collected by using this digital self-evaluation form. The e-questionnaire form included many open and closed (like Likert -scale) questions (see example in picture 3.). From the data, two open questions were selected. The first open question chosen for this article was, “What I learned the most in my volunteer

training”. Students needed to continue the sentence in this open question. The second open question was “The meaning of Volunteering work in general”. The whole e-questionnaire includes over 20 questions, but only two were selected for this research. These two open questions were the most important for finding the answers for the research questions of this paper.

The data were collected during year 2016-2017 and it included 134 participants (n=134). The data were analysed with content analysis (Gibbs 2007; Gergen & Gergen 2000; Robson 2012; Miles & Huberman 1994). The analysis was thematic, based on the supposed learning outcomes of the curriculum mentioned (like (Q1.) and theme (meaning) from the data (Q2.). The forms has been sent automatically for all students after their internship period. The two questions were chosen for the form, based on the aim of this paper. In other words, the sample was chosen based on the aim of this research paper, which is to present the Pedagogical Model of ”Learning Through Service and Volunteerism” in higher Education contexts, and some of its learning outcomes. Therefore, the whole data were looked at for an overall impression of the answers but not all the specific results of the questionnaire are presented in this paper.

6. Findings and Discussion

According to data, many students consider voluntary work very important and they have learned many Socialpedagogical skills or other paradigms. Students described that it is not important only for themselves or the client, but also for the whole community. Students argued that the third sector has a huge benefit for citizens, even in a welfare state like Finland. There is never too much caring between people.

1. *“What did you learn from volunteering work (internship)?”*
2. *“What do you think is the significance of volunteering work?”*

Below are some of the responses given to selected questions by selected respondents from the data. The responses selected are an analysis of all the responses from all the participants.

Q1. What did you learn during Volunteering work (internship)?

According to Social Services curriculum, there are expected learning outcomes for the students.

According to the data, these skills have been recognized, but also lot of more than expected. The skills are more transversal skills or meta skills, like emotional or communicational skills or decisions making skills (Heckman & Kautz 2012; Rodin & Levy 2015). Skills, which are needed in Social pedagogical work.

-“I had to think about how much I can and I want to give myself to client”,

-“Knowing how to communicate to adults who are present and available to me if they so wish. It was

Challenging, not as easy as you would think, at least for me.”

-“I spent time with an immigrant with children without a common language.”

Q2. “What do think is the significance of volunteering work?”

According to the answers, there are many examples of how students come to contact with challenges of people’s real everyday life. Students reported that they had worked in places like kindergarten, primary schools, and centers for the unemployed, homeless, or for people with disabilities, food assistance or other third sector organizations. A chance to get to see people’s ordinary life, and to be a support for them, seems to make it a meaningful learning experience for students. Almost all students considered volunteering work very important.

“Meaning is enormous.”

“Importance of voluntary activities is significant. The volunteers are doing a lot of good work --They are able to help many people and give them important, valuable time. To be present!”

“Its significance is great. Voluntary work is needed to help and support other people.”

“As a part of the other services -win-win for all”

“Preventive role.”

“Of great importance”

“The importance of the third sector will continue to grow in the social field as there will be an even bigger gap between supply and demand for services.”

Students also consider Volunteer work as a replace of lacking resources in society. Many students saw that volunteer work replaces or supports the public sector's services, even though this is not a typical way of thinking in Finland. The students see the difference they make in many people's life, even by doing small deeds. Volunteer work gives the students a chance to get more knowledge and be more involved in their society.

"Really important, especially now, when money is tight."

"Very significant. It supports the professional work and it is necessary. Social and health care is such a range of different sectors, it needs volunteers." "The voluntary sector has a significant contribution to people's well-being."

"Meaning is essential, especially at times when the economic situation in society is weaker, and all functions will be reduced."

Many of the respondents made a statement that volunteering work is important. Students from other fields than social services also considered it important. When thinking of the results, in relation to the expected curriculum learning outcomes, it can be said that more learning took place in LTV than was first expected. According to the data, there is evidence of learning outcomes like student's ethical competencies, communication and interpersonal skills, as well as their participatory and critical social competencies and professional appreciation. (Degree programme in Social Services: Curriculum 2014).

The respondents also were highly aware of the social policies in Finland at the moment, because the students' answers included a lot of concern about the future social and health services (SOTE) reform in Finland (& Volunteer work as a part of the reform). Students' critical thinking was clearly noticed in the data. However, based on the responses, it is clear that there were a lot of discussion about the reform in the media in Finland at the time when the data was collected. Students' ethical competencies, communication and interpersonal skills developed during the volunteer work, which was clearly noticed in the data. In addition, development of transversal skills (mostly connected to emotional skills) could also be recognized in the data. Social pedagogical way of see and understand the world was recognize in results.

7. Discussion

As a conclusion it can be said that Volunteering work as a part of the studies was greatly respected. Self-assessment is a relevant method/tool for evaluating the course. Self-assessment helps students to reflect their experiences of voluntary work and lead them back to the beginning of the process (the orientation task, see picture 1.). According to the results, Volunteer work has been seen as beneficial and meaningful work, not only for clients, or students, but also for all community and society. It is not a typical way of organizing services in Finland, but in the future, it could be more in focus, because of the forthcoming reform of law of health and social services. In other words, it seems that students learned a lot more in Voluntary work (internship) than was required of them (according to the curriculum).

Voluntary work (internship) is recommended to be used in all fields of studies and curricula. Generally, the findings of the analysis support the thinking that students (all fields) benefit of this new way of learning. The findings from the analysis of the students' responses showed that they learn more new skills in a new learning environment (*like responsibility, self-regulation, self-efficiency, wider view of society and third sectors as part of public services*). It is beneficial for everyone to get to know the society better, as well as learn Meta and transversal skills for the future. Learning in higher education is also taking place outside universities. Volunteering work internship would be great course for all field to get into deeper inside society and it persons. It would offer for other fields a way to get know Social pedagogical way of thinking. After that collaboration and innovative multiprofessional co-working would based on deeper understanding. Example engineering or ICT specialist could create better programmers for clients if they would understand more Social Pedagogical way of thinking. Volunteering work would offer more humane way to see and create new solutions for world in multiprofessional teams.

8. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine students' learning outcomes in a course called "Internship in Voluntary Work" (5, credits), in a multi-professional context at Metropolia University of Applied of

Sciences, Finland. There is also evidence that the pedagogical model of Learning through Service and Volunteerism” is a relevant pedagogical model for validating volunteer work in Higher Education, also in wider context. The limitations of this study need to be acknowledged: some answers given by students were short, and with interviews, wider and deeper data could be achieved. Still, these findings suggest that validating volunteer work in Higher Education is beneficial to students of all fields. Volunteering work as learning environment can open a new and unexpected way to see the world, and learn many new meta- or transferal skills, which will be needed in future. In best case, all these students’ achieved skill could be a part of the process to create emotionally, equally and sensitivity sustainability community.

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Tables and Figures:

Differences between the Service Learning and the Learning through Service and Volunteerism

Model

Service Learning	Learning Through Service and Volunteerism
Based on the values and historical background of critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy and the "doing good" of the 1960's American society ", e.g. services production in the nation's best interest.	The values and curricula are based on social pedagogical thinking (e.g. people's everyday, individual and community support to promote inclusion, emphasizing the reciprocity in learning), and co-operative pedagogy.
The higher education institution has an important role to play (not accompanied by volunteering organization).	Volunteering organizations have an important role to play.
The basic approaches in: Service Learning thinking: <i>change</i> and <i>charity</i> .	Confidence in the individual and the community's ability to solve problems (empowerment).
The higher education institution binds the teaching into the curriculum and guides students' learning.	If possible, the volunteering organization organizes a training course in voluntary work. Another option is organized it cooperation with the higher educational institution.
The aim is to strengthen the community by providing services (e.g. active citizenship and charity).	The aim of the activities is to reinforce or empower the community, to fulfil the demands of the student's curriculum to strengthen their value-related expertise. The aim is not in itself to produce new services, but it is possible that such will emerge as a result.
The starting point of the learning process is the initial mapping made by the (assessment of the service needs of the target community).	No initial mapping.
The supervision provided by the institution is in an active role.	The responsibility of the supervision of the volunteering activities lies on the volunteering organization. The educational institution will create the structures for cooperation and student counselling.

Table 1. From the differences to the Pedagogical Model of Learning Service and Volunteerism (Manninen & Raatikainen 2014). (p. 5.)

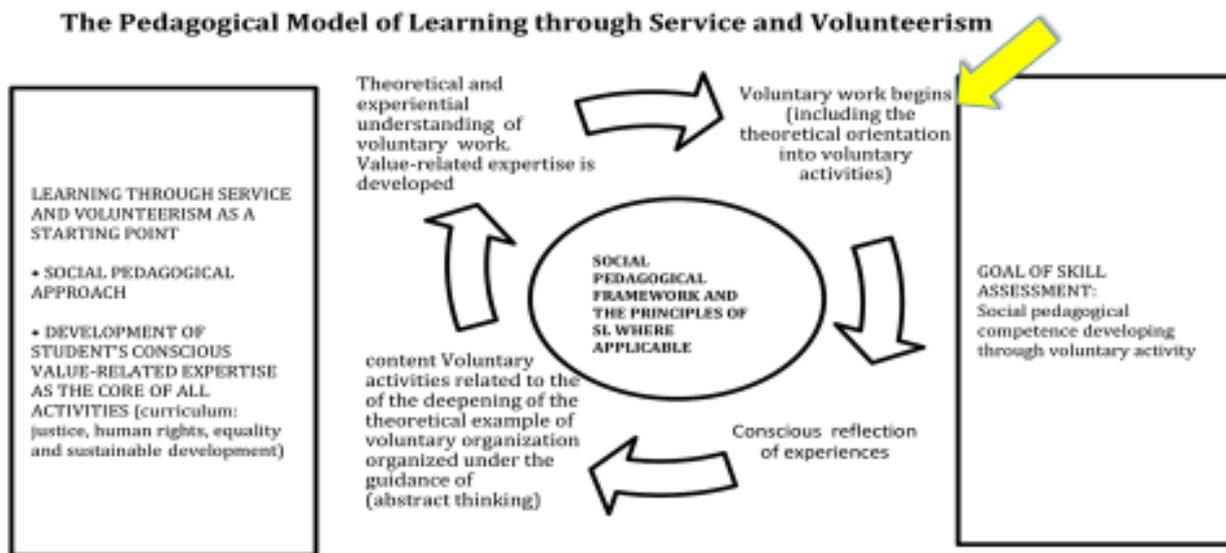


Figure 1. Pedagogical Model of Learning through Service and Volunteerism (p.7)

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