

Examining the impact of volunteering on student satisfaction, motivations and employability

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Aim of Presentation

- Brief overview of the literature
- Describe results of a study exploring volunteering experience in psychology students
- Discuss implications and recommendations

Literature and Rationale

- Volunteering motivations
 - Personal aspects of volunteering e.g. benefits for people with depression
 - Motivations to volunteer e.g. exploring differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations
 - Lack of research around experiences of volunteering and impact on degree

Literature and Rationale

- Transformative Learning
 - “Putting into practice” can lead to a change in perspectives
 - Mezirow’s (1991) theory: 1) self-reflection; 2) own judgement plus consideration of alternatives
 - Applied to volunteering
 - Deeper understanding from working with directly relevant populations

Literature and Rationale

- Experiential Learning
 - Research has explored student enjoyment, interest, compared to structured learning, preparedness for work
 - Related to volunteering: many student seek work experience relevant to career goals
 - Increased employability through being more prepared for career
 - Two way relationship of volunteering to classroom

Literature and Rationale

- Expectations of employability
 - Current context of Higher Education
 - Bates & Kaye (2014)
 - Kaye & Bates (2016)
 - Bromnick et al. (2012) detail the “bottle neck” - increase in psychology students/graduates and a simultaneous decrease of employment prospects
- Aim of study

Method

- Focus groups and interviews
- Students (n=11) and graduates (n=6)
- Interview Schedule
 - Volunteering
 - Degree
 - Employability
- Thematic analysis



Results – Motivations (beginning)

- Career oriented motivations
- Enhanced career prospects

“...at first kind of more just to get experience because especially in psychology... without experience you can't get a job”

“if you're unsure about where you want to go forward in the future that gives you that sort of dip into different places “

Motivations (continuing)

- Personally rewarding and career driven
- Beyond employability expectations

“I’d like to think I’m doing some good”

“I think it makes us more...committed to want to finish the course”

“...it’s opened a new potentially new career path that I wasn’t thinking of before “

Experiences of Volunteering

- Positive
- Personally and academically

“I do enjoy it and it is good experience being given challenges”

“It helps with your self-confidence as well “

“Yeah it’s fun it’s good to know that I can give back so yeah, it’s been positive...”

Challenges

- Balancing commitments and time
- Situations
- People and supervision

“...erm time management, fitting in volunteering and training alongside doing like assignments”

“Volunteering opened my eyes up to the real world, I’ve been brought up in cotton wool”

“...I know I’m only a volunteer...but you don’t feel important by them all the time”

Relationship with Degree

- Applying knowledge, situated learning
- Two way influence

“it’s like applying what you learn in class in like volunteering”

“I think I enjoy it [the degree] more because I do do it [volunteering] because I can see how it can help people”

“I think when you’re learning new material at uni um if you’ve got kind of real world experience... you feel like you can contribute a bit more”

Employability

- Instrumental in gaining employment and postgrad
- Indirect benefits e.g. confidence

“Oh definitely, my first job I got it when I was in third year...that was because I’d just finished the training course and started working with clients, and it was easier to fit in there because I knew all the systems”

“I’m not saying paid work is bad because both look amazing on your CV, volunteering just gives it that extra sparkle”

Conclusion and Implications

- Psychology job market saturation – volunteering enhances
- Self-determined but HEIs responsibility?
- Increased fees, increased financial investment – increased pressure on HEIs e.g. KIS, NSS

Conclusion and Implications

- Recommendations
 - PDP
 - Embedding more experiential learning? Placement?
 - Give opportunities for students to bring volunteering experience/reflection into classroom
- Future Directions
 - Trialling recommendations and evaluating
 - Explore experiences of those who were volunteering or those who chose not to



THANK YOU