

УДК 331.108.4

JEL: M12, M50; F23

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## VOLUNTARY SERVICE AS A TOOL INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL CAREER

*In the article, the author systematizes the knowledge concerning the issue of voluntary service as a tool that contributes to the changing of the interpersonal competences of future job candidates. Voluntary service enables young people to get valuable experience, influences the development of professional career and facilitates the entry of young people in the modern labour market. Thanks to the volunteering, they gain a competitive advantage on the labour market regardless of industry or position. Studies show that they are better perceived by future employers as candidates and have better perspectives in finding a job in the contemporary labour market. Nowadays good education is not enough. There is something else needed like additional competencies outside the formal education. The tool for acquiring such competences is a voluntary service which plays an increasingly important role among the younger generation.*

*The purpose of the article is to systematize knowledge in the field of volunteering and to present the relations between voluntary activity and the prospects of candidates entering the labour market. The article reviews Polish and European literature and reports on this topic.*

*Conclusions are that employers appreciate the non-professional activity of job candidates. Currently, young people are aware that volunteering activities have a positive effect on their situation on the labour market.*

*У статті автор систематизує знання щодо проблеми добровідної служби як інструменту, що сприяє зміні міжособистісних компетенцій майбутніх кандидатів на роботу. Добровільна служба дає змогу молодим людям отримати цінний досвід, впливає на розвиток професійної кар'єри та полегшує вступ молоді на сучасний ринок праці. Завдяки волонтерству вони отримують конкурентну перевагу на ринку праці незалежно від галузі чи посади. Дослідження показують, що такі молоді люди мають кращі перспективи у пошуку роботи на сучасному ринку праці, адже майбутні роботодавці їх краще сприймають як кандидатів на вакантні посади. Нині хорошої освіти недостатньо. Існує щось інше, наприклад додаткові компетенції поза формальною освітою. Інструментом набуття таких компетенцій є добровільна служба, яка відіграє все більшу роль серед майбутнього покоління.*

*Метою статті є систематизація знань у галузі волонтерства та представлення взаємозв'язків між добровільною діяльністю та перспективами виходу кандидатів на ринок праці. У статті розглядається польська та європейська література та доповіді на цю тему.*

*Висновки полягають у тому, що роботодавці цінують непрофесійну діяльність кандидатів на роботу. У даний час молоді люди знають, що волонтерська діяльність позитивно впливає на їхню ситуацію на ринку праці.*

*Keywords: volunteering; volunteer; labour market; personality; interpersonal competencies*

*Ключові слова: волонтерство; доброволець; ринок праці; особистість; міжособистісні компетенції*

**An introduction.** Globalization and changing realities on the labour market in Poland and in the European Union contributed to a change in demand for employees' competences, their work attitudes and the employees' needs. Today good education is not enough. There is something else needed e.g., additional

competencies outside the formal education, i.e. interpersonal skills, that can be acquired by group work at social level. This is a new approach to personnel management. The tool for acquiring such competences is a voluntary service. Voluntary service plays an increasingly important role among the younger generation. It allows young people to acquire new competences, as well as encounter the new needs of employees and solve social problems. On the other hand, taking into account the new realities and ever-changing world around us, it turns out that, when we stop for a moment, there is a lot of people around who need help, as they are unable to cope with so-called 'general acceleration', new economic order, or simply are disadvantaged, disabled or lost. Interest in other person, giving attention to the weakest and most afflicted, selflessness in acting, render social service in the form of voluntary service an indispensable pillar of almost every society (Polish, EU, global) [9, p. 9].

*The purpose* of the article is to systematize knowledge in the field of volunteering and to present the relations between voluntary activity and the prospects of candidates entering the labour market. This issue seems to be important in the face of the current situation on the labour market both in Poland and throughout Europe. Particularly young people, entering the labour market encounter the problem of finding their first job after completing education. That is why the answer to the research question becomes important: what are the expectations of employers from future employees, what competencies are required from candidates and does voluntary activity contribute to better career development and more attractive employment?

The article reviews Polish and European literature on this topic. The available labour market and volunteer work surveys were used to present in the final part of the work the conclusions resulting from the presented problem.

*An overview of the main research material.*

*Voluntary service as a tool for employee competences*

Most often, volunteering is associated with helping the disabled, fighting poverty, hunger or equalizing development opportunities by running various programs and charity projects. But that does not exhaust the topic and what the volunteers do. To better understand the concept of volunteering, one should start by explaining the meaning of the term volunteering and familiarizing with the most common definitions in the literature.

In the colloquial sense, volunteering is seen as an altruistic activity that comes from the need of the heart. However, the literature on the subject gives us many other definitions of volunteering and interpretations of the concept of volunteering. The Latin words *voluntas* / *voluntarius*, which mean goodwill, willingness, kindness, intention, and voluntariness, will help in understanding the meaning of these definitions [5]. Different definitions of volunteering are based on these words and this translation gave meaning to these definitions.

In the Polish literature, Małgorzata Załuska is the precursor in this topic, according to whom 'volunteers are people who work without remuneration, driven by the desire to learn the profession, help others and act to achieve their goals. Volunteers devote their time, energy and knowledge to others, giving up money and rest.' [16, p.95].

A similar interpretation was made by Mirosław Górecki, who believes that volunteering is 'free, voluntary and conscious permanent or occasional work for the benefit of people outside the family-friend circle' [7, p.335]. In this case, goodwill and a desire to help those in need are the pillars of this definition. Volunteering is based on a selfless will to serve other people and is not subject to binding standards. It also assumes some continuity and regularity in actions undertaken directly for the most needy [7].

Some authors of the definition of volunteering give it an educational role. According to Barbara Kromolicka's concept, volunteering 'helps shape the personality of volunteers' [7, p. 34]. Whereas Agnieszka Ciesiołkiewicz sees volunteering as 'permission to search for values in the affirmation of a dignified life, finding own place and role in the world, as well as satisfying the needs of belonging' [7]. It supports social integration and strengthens the sense of security, plays a big role in shaping independent thinking, critical judgment of reality as well as decision making and realization of dreams. Volunteering allows to get knowledge about the needs and behavior of other people and allows to adapt to them various methods and forms of aid. Obligation and keeping a promise are elements of ethical behaviour that shape the attitude of a mature person.

The definition of volunteering is also formulated by law and, according to the Act [1], it means an individual decision to get involved by sharing one's knowledge, skills and free time.

When we look at the definition of volunteering from the point of view of international organizations, the International Labour Organization provides one of the more important definitions. Here, volunteering is an activity that is not biologically, economically, politically or socially determined. It is an activity motivated mainly by the expected psychological benefits, the value of which is higher than the remuneration for this activity. In Europe, however, The European Volunteer Center and Association of Voluntary Service Organizations, organizations involved at the European level research of the third sector and voluntary activity, define volunteering as based on free will, conscious choice, free, formal or informal activity units undertaken in various fields, provided regularly or occasionally on a full-time or part-time basis, in the home country or abroad, benefiting the whole society, local communities and individual entities providing their services.

When talking about volunteering, it should be noted that depending on various criteria, several types of social work characteristic of volunteering can be distinguished (Table 1).

If we are considering the number of people taking part in assistance, we can distinguish individual and group volunteering. Another criterion is the place where volunteering takes place. We are dealing here with work in a local environment, at the national level, so called national volunteering and foreign volunteering.

Due to the period of work performed by the volunteer, short-term or long-term volunteering is distinguished. Short-term volunteering can be the nationwide campaign Noble Package, long-term volunteering, lasting up to 12 months, is European Voluntary Service, which is gaining more and more approval in our country. Student volunteering is distinguished by the fact that ambitious and creative students from all over Poland can transfer their knowledge, interests and passions to those in need. It is important that students with their offer reach out mainly to rural, small-town environments and people or families in need.

Senior Volunteering, also known as volunteering among third age people or volunteering of competences. Due to the fact that Poles' lives have extended, the number of professionally inactive older people who have experience, knowledge, skills and want to feel needed has increased. They are the people with a baggage of multiple experiences. They can significantly contribute to the development of the local community as leaders or advisers. Their activity is beneficial for the whole community that can draw on their professionalism and competence.

Employee volunteering is mainly focused on promoting the idea of volunteering among adults. For the community, it is specific help in solving local problems, while for enterprises it has a number of benefits. Volunteers have the satisfaction of participating in projects which build close relationships with their immediate environment, the company gains motivated employees and can realistically influence positive changes in the environment, and thus strengthens its positive image.

Classification out of done work or help has many positions on the list. This group includes volunteering at school, in the hospital, in nursing homes, childcare centres, public administration and other places.

An interesting and relatively new, related to cybernetization of today's world, is volunteering using tools such as: the Internet, messengers, forums, social networking sites and discussion panels. On the basis of this type of functioning of ICT forms of providing support, e-volunteering has been created [10, p. 133].

**Table 1**

**Classification of volunteering**

<b>Classification of volunteering</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Voluntary Service</b>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
Number of people	Individual, Collective
Place	National-local environment Foreign

Continuation of Table 1

1	2
Duration	Short-term, Long-term
Entity performing	Student, youth, seniors – competences, people of third age, staff
Specificity of volunteering due to the activities performed	School, Hospital, Help in nursing homes, Care and education facilities, In public administration, In animal shelters,
Random factor, natural disasters, difficult living situation	Crisis
Regular events	Gift under the Christmas tree'
Computerization	E-volunteering

Source: Own elaboration based on S. Leszczyński, Volunteering - definition, types, social readaptation, DOI: 10.15503 / onis2012-131-138, *Gardens of Sciences and Art*. No. 2012 (2), p. 132–134.

### Areas of volunteer activities

Volunteering assistance can be directed to children, the sick, the disadvantaged, the elderly and the lost, the excluded, from the social margin, in need. The widest field of activities is presented by the Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit activities and volunteering, which lists the specific tasks carried out by public benefit organizations in the sphere of public tasks. The most popular areas of voluntary activity are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

### The most popular fields of voluntary activity

Fields of voluntary activity
Social work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the poorest, homeless, humanitarian aid</li> <li>- employment, work</li> <li>- charity work</li> </ul>
Health protection and activities for the benefit of the disabled
Sport
Education, science, youth organizations
Ecology, Environmental protection, Animal protection, Tourism, Sightseeing
Public order and security
Rescue, civil protection, assistance to victims
Social movements, social campaigns and campaigns
Activities for the family, women's organizations
Culture and art
Religion, parish activities

Source: Own study based on the Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit activity and volunteering, Journal of Laws from 2016 item 239.

According to research from 2013 carried out by the Klon / Jawor Association “Social activity of Polish people” [12, p. 12-13], volunteers usually choose charitable organizations that support the poorest and homeless. Religious organizations and movements, parish communities and the opportunity to help on missions are comparatively popular among volunteers. Volunteers can also be found in educational organizations and in parents’ councils. Among the largest group of volunteers, i.e. pupils and students, trends tend to be slightly different than among the general population. Young volunteers usually get

involved in tasks run by sports organizations, but they are also familiar with helping charities and youth organizations.

### **Volunteer personality and position on the labour market**

Many studies on the labour market analyze the situation based on the well-known concept of “homo oeconomicus” in economic literature. For this purpose, variables such as age, education, professional experience, family, characteristics of the place of residence and household are used. Recently, the concept of “homo oeconomicus” has been significantly expanded and the influence of social preferences and personality types on the decisions of the hosting entity is beginning to be taken into account. Studies show that they can also affect the position of an individual on the labour market, because volunteering is an opportunity to change own personality or interpersonal skills and gain valuable professional experience.

On the other hand, there is empirical evidence that volunteers form a specific group in terms of social preferences and personality types. Disregarding these features can therefore be a source of incorrect estimation of volunteering bonuses. That is why, in accordance with the broadened concept of “homo oeconomicus”, the role of personality types in the activities of a hosting entity should be taken into account [4, p. 11–13].

In the face of this concept, the question arises: what character traits should a volunteer have for challenging work, often hard and in return not receive cash equivalent in the form of remuneration? What are the characteristics of a person who wants to devote her/his time, health and skills to another person? What motives and reasons are guiding people who decide to become volunteers?

It is not easy to establish a uniform volunteer model. But some features are repetitive and give direction to volunteers’ actions. These include: willingness and need to help others, empathy, enthusiasm, honesty, openness, kindness, tolerance, independence, availability, communication skills and trust in people.

When discussing the attitude of a volunteer, we can formulate rules and a code of conduct that should be followed by a person willing to voluntarily help other people. He/she should be confident, loyal, convinced of what he does, follow the rules, be happy to learn and take care of personal development, be a person we can rely on and be able to work in a team and keep confidential information secret.

Literature gives many reasons why people want to start social work, and gives many divisions. The author presents one of them (Table 3).

**Table 3**

**Motives for undertaking voluntary work**

<b>Motives</b>		
<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Pragmatic (Instrumental)</b>
A way to determine own identity, Raising self-esteem. The need to stand out Personal development, own skills, Sense of satisfaction and fulfillment, Conviction of the rightness of your actions.	Will to meet new people, Gaining some social status Gaining recognition, Group membership, Development of social networks.	Willing to do something useful, Proving own possibilities, Gaining new skills,  <b>Increasing own chances and position in the labour market.</b>

Source: Own study based on: Gilejko L.K., Błaszczuk B., *Civic activity at the local level. Forms and conditions. Localism. Regionalism. Globalism*, Typography, Pułtusk 2011, pp. 207–208.

People take different motives in making their decisions. The helping mechanism is not always a simple dependency, it is quite often complicated, and the motivations of the helping people result from various sources. It even happens that a person can be guided by several motives, or the entire spectrum of motives. The mechanism of motivational behavior is undoubtedly multiform and it is difficult to isolate these motives separately for some people. Motivation that stimulates people to take action for free and voluntary work depends on various conditions and often has a complex background. The undertaking value

is determined by the value of the goal for a given person and the possibility of achieving this goal. Opportunities should be understood as not only objective conditions, but also as a certain mental abilities [9, p. 37]. As it has been written before, it should not be forgotten that often a man in his seemingly selfless behavior is guided by his own interest, even the need for better well-being, appreciation from doing work for other people, or to improve his situation on the labour market in the future. However, these are not the only reasons, because according to what statistics show, we still have people around us who, despite various adversities, or guided by different motives, want to share with others what they have and do it with pleasure.

It has been proved that social preferences and personality types have a significant impact on the decisions of a hosting entity and affect the position of the individual on the labour market and the willingness to the volunteer involvement. In the debate on the future of the "welfare" state, the importance of volunteering is increasingly emphasized, but it is recognized not only as socially useful work, but also as a form of acquiring skills and qualifications to take up paid work. Identification of existence of a return from volunteer activities is therefore valuable in the context of improving the competences desired in the labour market, changing the way of managing human resources, and even became a business tool.

According to the report summarizing the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of student volunteering "Projector" [13] students carrying out volunteer projects work not only for wanting to help others, but also for themselves. They see a lot the benefits they can derive from this activity. They include: new friends, new skills and experiences, a valuable way of spending free time. The most important skills they acquire as a part of this activity are: public speaking skills, teamwork, self-confidence, courage and development in their field.

In a dynamically changing labour market, employees' competences largely contribute to improving the quality of today's workforce. Many studies of the labour market and human capital [14] show that volunteering as a form of informal education can be a tool to shape competences desired by employers. During their work, volunteers acquire competences that are also scarce in the labour market from the employer's perspective. As a part of volunteering, regardless of its type, volunteers shape their "soft" competences (personal and interpersonal), as well as often "hard" competences (knowledge, training, experience) useful in their future careers. In the list of sought after competences of a young candidate, the most desirable, in addition to those professional ones, are definitely the "soft" skills that have been presented in Table 4. According to research 46% of employers expect young employees primarily to be responsible, disciplined and honest [19].

Table 4

#### Competences sought among young employees

"Soft" skills	
Good contact with customers	Responsibility
Work discipline	Honesty
Reliability	Communication skills
Personal culture	Caring for the image
Availability	creativity
Dealing with stressful situations	diligence

Source: Own study based on *Youth or experience? Human capital in Poland*, a report summarizing the third edition of the study "Balance of Human Capital", J. Górniak, PARP, Warsaw 2013, p. 27.

According to the results of research carried out as a part of the *Human Capital Balance* [14], regardless of the occupation for which employees were sought, the importance of competences was emphasized:

1. Self-organizing, i.e. skills: time management, independence, decision making and manifesting initiatives, resistance to stress and willingness to work.
2. Professional, specific skills necessary to perform the tasks appropriate for the job.
3. Interpersonal skills, ability to contact people, be communicative, cooperate in a group, resolve interpersonal conflicts.

Currently, more and more volunteering services is similar to the structure of various types of companies, which is why candidates can check their predispositions in the context of a selected job. Therefore, volunteering can be a testimony of a person with passion and give her/him a competitive

advantage on the labour market and a good start at the beginning of her/his professional career.

**Conclusions.** The main idea of volunteering is helping and voluntary social work resulting from human motivation for this kind of activity. By its very nature, volunteering promotes active participation in social life through participation in organizations and non-profit institutions, develops independence and creativity and, through its positive action, encourages people to fully participate in social life. It is also important that all non-governmental organizations constituting the so-called third sector, teach activity and civic responsibility. It's worth thinking about volunteering as about a chance for a person. In addition, volunteering should be treated as devoting oneself to something important and special. According to the opinions of people who decided and dared to work with another person, being a volunteer greatly raises the awareness of one's self-esteem and gives the opportunity to see the positive effects of this work. Volunteering, even the hardest one, is optimistic, gives energy and a sense of satisfaction. Volunteering fits in its role and philosophy with the modern assumptions of positive psychology, also known as the psychology of happiness. In addition, it raises the level of interpersonal competences, which are highly valued by employers and give a competitive advantage on the labour market regardless of the industry or job position for which the candidate is applying. It should be remembered that employers appreciate the non-professional activity of job candidates. They recognize the positive impact of past or current volunteer activity on employees. Employers are able to list the positive qualities of volunteer workers that other employees of their companies do not have. Currently, young people are aware that volunteering activities have a positive effect on their situation on the labour market. Thus, volunteering is a way to success on the labour market, both in Poland and the European Union. It turns out that recruiters, whether in small domestic companies or large global corporations, very willingly start conversations with people who declare to participate in volunteering in their CV, and as candidates for a new job have a better chance than people who have not experienced work as a volunteer.

**Summary.** To summarize, it can be said that volunteering is a lifestyle, it is discovering own way, thanks to it young people become their own teachers and discover the path of development [8], but also what was presented in this article, change their civic attitude, interpersonal skills, build self-esteem and thus give themselves the chance to find a job and improve their professional career in the modern labour market, both domestic and global. It turns out that employers pay attention not only to education and experience, but also to non-professional activity and interpersonal competences that are actually shaped as a part of voluntary work.

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Статтю отримано 20 червня 2019 року  
Article received June 20, 2019