

Book Review



Duguid, F., Mundel, K., & Schugurensky, D. (2017): Volunteer Work, Informal Learning and Social Action. Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Hungarian Educational Research Journal
2018, Vol. 8(4) 120–122
© The Author(s) 2018
<http://herj.lib.unideb.hu>
Debrecen University Press



DOI:10.14413/HERJ/8/4/12

Reviewed by Valeria Markos³³

The book edited by Fiona Duguid, Karsten Mundel and Daniel Schugurensky focuses on the different dimensions of work, learning and social action. The book consists of eleven chapters from the volunteering through the informal learning to the social movements.

Nowadays, most of the research, dealing with the work of young people, is concentrating on paid work instead of non-paid or volunteer work. From the introduction of the book, we recognise the meaning of volunteering, so from this point, we reinterpret the meaning of the word. Besides the traditional meaning of the volunteering, we can read the formalization, institutionalization and professionalization of voluntary work. According to the authors, the biggest reason for this is due to the changing economic and political context, and the pressure of the increasing accountability on non-profit organizations. Moreover, service-learning in high schools and universities is a way to motivate young people to volunteer.

On the other hand, the authors discover the relationship between volunteer work and informal learning. The book shows that learning may take place in volunteer work because people can improve different kinds of skills and competencies during volunteering such as interpersonal, communication, organising and managing, fundraising and technical skills (first aid, coaching, computer skills) knowledge regarding different areas like health, gender, political issues and environment,.

Susan Stowe presents the major international and Canadian voluntary trends. The number of Canadian volunteers and the number of hours of volunteer work from 1987 to 2007 was gradually grown. The increase was influenced by the changes in the economy and the workplace. According to the Work and Lifelong Learning Project (2004), principally youth between 18 and 24 years and in the mid-adulthood, women, married people, those who have worked ever, and graduated people are more likely to

³³ University of Debrecen, Debrecen (Hungary), Email address: markosvaleria.90@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-7560-5376

work as a volunteer. Most people choose religious organisations, school or neighbourhood organisations, sports or cultural organisations where they can work. The main motivational reasons are to contribute to the community or the fact that volunteering can improve their job opportunities. Most volunteers report informal learning during their activities, but the authors found differences regarding gender, place of birth, and the level of education and income. Most people learned about teamwork, problem-solving and interpersonal knowledge but only a few of them learned a language, financial management and computers. Certainly, there are differences along to the learning and background variables.

The study of Kunle Akingbola, Fiona Duguid and Martha Viveros deals with the Canadian Red Cross Volunteers. Principally, they are looking for the following answers: what types of knowledge and skills do volunteers acquire, how do volunteers learn, and who is likely to benefit from the learning acquired through volunteering? Red Cross offers different kind of programs and services (Volunteer Resource Management Certificate program, Disaster Service Level 1 training) for volunteers where there are possibilities for non-formal learning and the personal and professional skills development. The question is how volunteers learn? According to the authors, they can learn from each other and through their activities and experiences. Volunteering has a transfer effect: volunteers report to transfer dispositional learning to other areas of their life.

J. Adam Perry aims to draw attention to the learning among the Frontier College volunteers and in the labourer-teacher program. The analysis of the data collected for this research suggests that the Frontier College labourer-teacher program develops the learning of the cultural synthesis, solidarity, student-centred learning and helps to improve the transformative learning of the volunteers.

The growing trend of immigrants in Canada is doing unpaid work in the public, non-profit and private sector in order to increase their employability. The qualitative research of Bonnie Slade, Yang Cathy Luo and Daniel Schugurensky presents the importance of volunteering among Canadian immigrants. According to the participants, volunteering improves their access to the labour market such as to improve understanding and using English mainly as a work-related language, to learn about the culture, to get a job, to meet people and to involve in the Canadian society.

Fiona Duguid, Karsten Mundel and Daniel Schugurensky explore the learning experiences in housing co-operatives. According to the results of the interviews and focus groups, volunteers developed self-governance, management, leadership, attitudes and values, political efficacy and other competencies. During the interviews, the participant could reflect on the learning (primarily non-formal and informal) experiences. This helped them to retrieve different learning experiences and reflected on them.

The study of Behrang Foroughi and Erica McCollum investigates the tenant volunteers work motivation, their activities and informal learning. Most of the tenants volunteer because they want to do something for the community and want to be socially active. Further aims are to encourage people for the community involvement. During the volunteering activity, informal learning regarding confidence, connection, political efficacy and participatory citizenship could be experienced. Daniel Schugurensky draws attention to the role of volunteering and learning in the democracy in three Latin American cities. Beyond the community involvement, electoral participation and political voices of the collaborative public action are also substantial as the main aim is to investigate civic engagement. The volunteers develop civic and political knowledge, attitudes, skills and practices during their activities. Volunteers can learn about local government work, trade-offs, costs of projects and the sources of revenue, social reality, different kind of democratic skills, collaboration with others, speak in public, political efficacy, self-confidence, needs of other groups etc. Daniel Schugurensky has another study with Karsten Mundel that provides a further investigation of the learning progress of the volunteers. The authors found that during the volunteering, learning is the most important thing as learning connects to concrete experiences. The authors draw attention to organisations concentrating on those who do rather than reflect or learn. They should enhance the reflective activities as volunteers' learning may contribute to social change.

Kate Rogers and Megan Haggerty report on the content and process of informal learning within the social movements in Cuernavaca, Mexico. A social movement is not totally considered as volunteering despite of the participants are volunteers, their work is unpaid and they work for others. During the activities, tacit learning concerning social, economic or legal issues, new attitudes and skills development is evolving. The participants can learn from their own mistakes or from reflections.

To sum up, the aim of the studies is to draw attention to the connections between volunteer work, informal learning and social actions. We can see that most volunteer activities contribute to learning, primarily to informal and non-formal learning. During the activities, volunteers can improve skills (instrumental, interpersonal, communication, advocacy, political efficacy, self-governance and social awareness) to gain experiences, to develop their civic and political knowledge. Through these studies, we can see that volunteering is one of the best ways of informal learning.