

and additionally held at

aces Kick-off 2011
25 – 29 September 2011
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Workshop: „So, what did you learn while volunteering?”

Date, Time: Thursday, 31.03.2011, 10:30 – 12:30 and 14:15 – 16:15

Date, Time: Wednesday, 28.09.2011, 9:45 – 12:45 and 14:15 – 17:15 including 30 min break

Trainer: Darko Markovic, Inn.Side – people and training, Serbia

Workshop content/theme

Volunteering is not only about providing helping hands to people in need and contributing to your local community, it is also - a learning opportunity! Indeed through volunteering you may gain new knowledge, develop skills and reflect on your attitudes and values. During this workshop, we have explored how learning is happening in voluntary service and what are the creative methods and tools to support it.

Aims

- To raise awareness of the learning dimension of volunteering (“learning service”)
- To practice asking reflective questions to support learning of volunteers
- To try out various tools for identification and documenting own learning

Method(s)/Approach

- Welcome and introduction to the workshop (5')
- Theatre warm up games (10')
 - 1-2-3 in couples
 - Professions and stereotypes
- 3 groups working on short theatre plays on volunteering (25')
See handout “3 stories” attached.
- Short input about asking good questions to support learning (5'):
Volunteers are normally not aware of the learning dimension in the voluntary service (they simply do the service!), but in fact lots of learning is happening during volunteering. However, in order to realize this, these experiences need to be reflected on. One of the best ways to do this is to ask good reflective questions that help volunteers realize what they have gained in the process.
Instead of asking “What did you learn?” which is not a very practical question and always too difficult to answer, let’s practice asking questions that focus on knowledge, skills, attitudes.
- 3 groups – practising asking reflective questions (45'):
After each short play, the audience have the possibility to ask questions to “volunteers” from the play, the volunteers do not reply, but give feedback on the quality of the question with the “arm evaluation method” (if the question is not stimulating the arm stay down if it is more stimulating the arm goes up). Good questions are recorded on flipchart. Finally, the handout “Asking good questions” was delivered.
- 3 groups working on identification and documenting their learning (based on self-assessment) using 3 different methods: (30') See handout “Self-assessment tools” attached

- a. Self-assessment cards “Development – skills and attitudes”
 - b. Learning Collage
 - c. Learning blog at: <http://volunteerandlearn.blogspot.com/>
- Short presentation of groups’ products and reflection about tools (10’)
 - Workshop evaluation and closing (5’)

Further tips, sources, resource material or links

- For theatre warm-ups see book “Games for Actors and non-actors”
- Self-assessment cards: www.kwaliteitenspel.nl
- For learning support tools see UNIQUE’s project website: www.learning2learn.eu

Impressions, Outcomes of the workshop

The workshops were dynamic enough both for students and teachers and covered a lot in a short time. The programme gave some inspiration and tips how to deal with learning of volunteers during the service. Some of the key messages from the workshop were:

- Volunteers are often not aware of the “learning dimension” during the service.
- In order to make it learning, these experiences need to be reflected on.
- Asking “What did you learn?” is usually too abstract and difficult to answer.
- Consider asking more reflective questions targeting new knowledge, skills and attitudes gained during the voluntary service .
- Ask open-ended questions (what, how, why etc.) instead of closed questions.
- Think about various and more creative tools to tackle learning during the volunteering (e.g. self-assessment cards, diaries, blogs, postcards for reflection, learning collage, reflecting with peers etc.).





HANDOUT 1 – Three stories

Story 1:

Your school has established contact with the organization “Healthy living” that works on AIDS/HIV prevention in your city. The organization does many local campaigns at public places and needs many volunteers for its activities. In your school two teachers and a group of students have shown the interest to join the activities of the “Healthy Living” in the forthcoming music festival this summer. The school group joins the planning meetings at the organization in order to develop concrete activities how to raise awareness about AIDS/HIV amongst young people at the festival. Finally, the school group, including teachers and students, participate in the campaigning activities during the 4-day festival as agreed in the planning stage.

Your **task** is to develop a short theatre play of maximum 3 minutes based on your story. The play should focus on the experience of the volunteers and should include both volunteers and other people. The play should be self-explanatory to the audience. You have 15 minutes for preparation of the play.

Story 2:

A group of teachers and students from your school have decided to do some voluntary work in your town. After contacting local Red Cross office, you have realized that there are at least 20.000 elderly people in your town who live completely on their own. Those people usually have no social contacts and difficulties in mobility and maintain in doors most of the time. They need some practical help (e.g. getting food and medicine from the shop) as well as social contacts to fight the feeling of loneliness.

You have established a team of volunteers led by two teachers and 15 students and invited people from Red Cross to give you a basic training about needs of elderly people and communication skills. After the training you made a promotional campaign in your neighbourhood about your voluntary services and first 20 people called you, so you have started with regular visits.

Your **task** is to develop a short theatre play of maximum 3 minutes based on your story. The play should focus on the experience of the volunteers and should include both volunteers and other people. The play should be self-explanatory to the audience. You have 15 minutes for preparation of the play.

Story 3:

A group of teachers and students from your school have decided to do some voluntary work in your town. After considerations of the needs in the community they have decided to make a contact with the local Roma community living in a settlement close to your school. After initial meetings between representatives of teachers and students with people from the Roma settlement, it was agreed that the volunteers may come twice a week first to learn a bit more about life of Roma and later to support younger children in their learning and school homework. In your school you have done some initial preparation of volunteers where you invited people from Roma community and started with successful voluntary visits to the settlement during the following six months.

Your **task** is to develop a short theatre play of maximum 3 minutes based on your story. The play should focus on the experience of the volunteers and should include both volunteers and other people. The play should be self-explanatory to the audience. You have 15 minutes for preparation of the play.

HANDOUT 2 – Self-assessment tools

Self-assessment: identifying and documenting your learning

Self-assessment cards

Being in the role of the volunteers from your story, your task is to identify what skills you have developed and improved during the volunteering experience.

In order to do that, distribute all the cards face up on the table. Each person has 7 stickers and individually puts them on 7 skill-cards you think you have developed during the voluntary service.

When this is done, take out all the cards without stickers and start discussing only the marked ones. During the discussion you have to use arguments based on the volunteering experience how certain skill was developed. As a group you should agree on 10 most essential skills developed and write down few sentences how each of them have been developed.

Self-assessment: identifying and documenting your learning

Learning Collage

Being in the role of the volunteers from your story, your task is to identify what you have developed and learnt during the volunteering experience. You may think about new knowledge gained (e.g. new information, better understanding etc.), new skills developed (e.g. communication skills, planning skill...) or new attitudes (e.g. more sensitivity, openness, solidarity etc.). During this process, think about concrete examples when and how these knowledge, skills and attitudes were developed. Present your findings in form of a collage.

Self-assessment: identifying and documenting your learning

Learning blog

Being in the role of the volunteers from your story, your task is to identify what you have developed and learnt during the volunteering experience. You may think about new knowledge gained (e.g. new information, better understanding etc.), new skills developed (e.g. communication skills, planning skill...) or new attitudes (e.g. more sensitivity, flexibility, solidarity etc.).

Your task will be to set up your Learning Blog posting your reflections about learning during the process of volunteering: <http://volunteerandlearn.blogspot.com/>

If you don't know how to start sentences about your learning, consider these unfinished ones:

- *Now I know...*
- *I feel more confident...*
- *I became aware of...*
- *I can better do...*
- *I found out...*
- *I realized...*
- *I made progress...*

You may also take images using the people from your group to illustrate these learning moments, link YouTube files etc.

Asking reflective questions to facilitate learning of volunteers



Remember:

- Volunteers are often not aware of the “learning dimension” during the service
- In order to make it learning, these experiences need to be reflected
- Asking “What did you learn?” is usually too abstract and difficult to answer
- Consider asking more reflective questions targeting new knowledge, skills and attitudes gained during the voluntary service
- Ask open-ended questions (what, how, why etc.) instead of closed questions.



Some ideas for reflective questions:

- *While working with _____, what did you find out about _____?*
- *While working with _____, what did you find out about yourself?*
- *During the process of working with _____ what was your reaction that surprised you?*
- *What would you do differently next time based on this experience?*
- *After this experience, what do you feel more confident about?*
- *What was the information that you got about _____?*
- *What skills were needed to do that task successfully?*
- *What were your “a-ha!” moments in this project?*
- *What is that you are able to do now and could not do it before this experience?*
- *If you think about the value of this experience for you, what are the three most important things that you gained for yourself?*
- *If you compare yourself now and before the project, how did this experience contribute to what you are today?*