

# Volunteer Internships as a Factor of Formation of Students' Professional Competence for the Educational Program “Advertising and Public Relations”

Alexandr Vetitnev\*  
Sochi State University  
Sochi, Russia

Marina Kruglova  
Sochi State University  
Sochi, Russia

Victoria Shuvanova  
Sochi State University  
Sochi, Russia

Igor Shuvanov  
Sochi State University  
Sochi, Russia

**Abstract**-This paper responds to the need for research on the volunteering practices in modern Russian universities according to the competence approach in higher education. An in-depth survey was conducted after students having an internship at the 2018 World Cup events. Discussion highlights how volunteer internship gives new opportunities to ensure practice-oriented training on the example of the undergraduate program “Advertising and Public Relations”. Findings suggest that volunteering helps to develop the competencies prescribed in the curriculum.

**Keywords**-student volunteering, competence approach, communicative competence, sociological survey, FIFA World Cup

## I. INTRODUCTION

Modernization of education and changes in socio-economic conditions lead to the need to revise the system of training students in higher education. At present, graduates must have a high level of professional competence, be competitive, mobile, tolerant, and ready to work in a constantly changing society. A special role in this process belongs to internships in the framework of annual internships, which have a formative effect on the development of the personality of a future specialist.

One of the new forms of summer internship is student volunteering. To date, a large theoretical and empirical material has been accumulated. It opens up opportunities for understanding the specifics of the phenomenon of student volunteering. However, in the literature, some aspects are insufficiently covered, such as reshaping educational experience by adding volunteering to the learning process.

The working hypothesis of this study lies in the scientific assumption about the possibility of practicing future professional roles while volunteering due to the fact that volunteer programs influence the development of professional competencies. The object of the research in

this article was the student youth, who has experience of participating in the 2018 World Cup volunteer program, and at the same time studies advertising and PR at the university. The purpose of this paper is to show the primary results and to identify the directions for further research.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Competence Approach in Higher Education

During the period of study at the university, students should get an integral system of universal knowledge and skills, as well as the experience of independent professional activity, in the aggregate, general cultural and professional competences. Based on a review of domestic and foreign sources, the authors analyzed various approaches to the concept of “competence”. It can be defined as a set of personal characteristics, abilities, knowledge, skills and motivational components that are expressed in behavioral terms ensuring employee effectiveness in a certain aspect of professional activity [1]. The result of the development of a graduate is a professional competence, which can be achieved by not only acquiring experience in the chosen specialty, but also developing certain personal qualities and intellectual abilities.

Professional competence is usually characterized by a set of knowledge and skills, as well as personal qualities that allow a person to carry out professional activities in collaboration with the outside world [2]. Formation of professional competency takes place in the educational space of the university. The content of the educational process, the structure of educational, educational and research activities should be based on the requirements of society and the labor market, the specifics of the profession, social, economic, political, informational, communicative, cultural features of the modern world. The main idea of the competence-based approach is to change the content of education and put in the first place not only the awareness of the student, but also the ability to solve problems independently in difficult situations.

The formation of key competencies is not limited to the learning process within the university. Competences are formed not only in the learning process, but also under the influence of the environment, that is, in the framework of formal and non-formal education outside the university. Thus, the concept of "competence" is a process concept, i.e. competences both are formed and shown in different kinds of student activities [3]. Student volunteering is usually defined as an educational activity, pedagogical process, social technology, serious leisure, a way to convert free time into various types of cultural capital. At the same time, a number of researchers study volunteering as a stage in developing student's professional personality.

### *B. Interconnection of Competences and Student Volunteering*

Volunteering is a completely new phenomenon for modern Russia; it unites citizens for the benefit of the society and the community. According to L. Sikorskaya, volunteering is a way of preserving and strengthening human values, such as kindness, gratuitous help to any person, regardless of cultural or ethnic characteristics, religion, age, and gender. When volunteering, a person enters a positive environment, performs socially useful work, practicing his skills [4]. Sociological studies report that a significant number of students around the world participate in volunteer activities. Educational institutions have the best opportunities for the development and the popularization of the volunteer movement.

Admittedly, volunteering is recognized as an integral part of student engagement [5]. This concept can be determined by the following definition [6]: mutually beneficial cooperation between the university, staff, students, and society, promoting active student learning through participation in events. Voluntary work enhances students' awareness, which allows them to break out of a "student bubble" [7].

Volunteerism mixed with the learning process occurs to expand the tools of problem-oriented education in higher education [8]. Through volunteer projects, students increase their job prospects and raise their cultural level. Joint activities enrich social intelligence, negotiating skills and creative abilities [9]. Volunteers have the opportunity to "play" many roles that contribute to the development of their social competence [10]. Through volunteering, young people exercise the range of behavioral strategies in various life situations.

Volunteer organizations nowadays provide internship placement opportunities, which aim mastering the elements of professional activity, developing general cultural and professional competencies in accordance with the requirements of employers. The term "professional socialization" implies acquaintance with the future career through out-of-class experience. The program of volunteer practices can be developed by volunteer clubs in collaboration with the relevant department of the faculty. One of the directions of introducing volunteer activities

into the educational process is student volunteer projects. The result of the volunteer internship can be the implementation of the project.

### *C. Communication-Based Volunteer Internship*

At the beginning of the XXI century, the educational value of the communicative competence among students increased significantly, due to the speed of obsolescence of information and new conditions of production. In the global space, the tendency towards the creating of the information society is growing, which means that communication technologies are becoming more competitive, and the level of professional competences of communication specialists gains a fundamental importance.

The main goal of education is the intellectual development of the student's personality, including the ability to work independently with information, to think critically, to articulate advanced positions, to be able to work in any social groups, to prevent conflict situations or to skillfully leave them, i.e. to possess communicative competence at a high creative level. Possession of communicative competence becomes one of the conditions for flexible adaptation of graduates of a school or university to changing life situations [11].

Future professional activity of "Advertising and Public Relations" program's graduates assumes achieving professional goals and objectives through information and interaction routines, which allow to refer them to the communications training. This profession is aimed at shaping public opinion about a certain object (company, person, event, product, and idea), creating, maintaining and developing a positive image and communications with a target audience. When teaching students specialized disciplines like marketing communications, media relations, speech writing or brand management, communicative competence is integrated into business communication and provides knowledge and skills to act as spokesperson, PR-manager, assistant in government and public institutions, commercial structures, expert, consultant on mass media, public relations or advertising [12].

Forming the communicative competence of students is not limited to educational activities. For example, the experience of international volunteering increases the level of students' intercultural communicative competence [13]. Event projects become a multifunctional platform for communication work [14]. Event volunteering is an activity aimed at helping to organize and conduct major significant events at the local or global levels. Volunteers of mega-sporting events, like the Olympic Games or the Universiade, are specific to interacting with various contact groups, including the media, fans, honored guests and athletes.

The communication platform of volunteering is particular relevant to the essence of advertising and public relations, as it's shown in the conceptual model (Fig. 1). In order to get a more detailed view of volunteer internships at

mega-events and its impact on competencies, see the results of an empirical study.

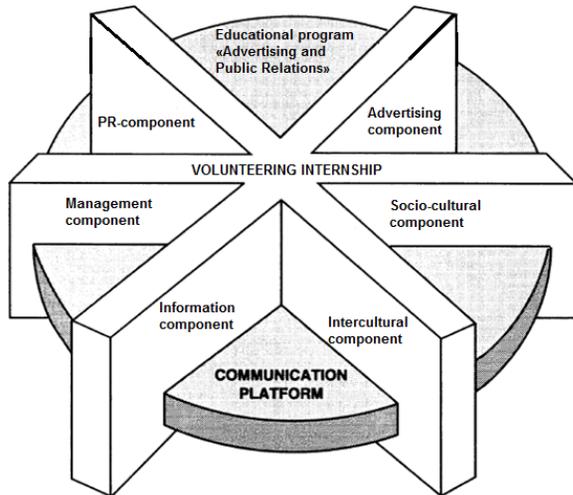


Figure 1 Communication-Based volunteer activity's model for student internship

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article draws on a survey which was carried out among students after one of the largest events in Russian sports history, the FIFA World Cup 2018. To participate in the study, from the total number of FIFA Sochi volunteers, we selected those who study full-time or part-time on the “Advertising and Public Relations” Bachelor degree program at Sochi State University. SSU won the competition of higher education organizations for the right to become a center for attracting and training volunteers to participate in the holding of the World Cup 2018. As studies show, a rather positive attitude prevailed among Russian students [15]. Many of students are football fans, and this event gave them a real opportunity to attend championship matches for the first time in their lives.

The time when the championship was held coincided with the dates of the summer jobs. That is why students from different faculties of SSU could get this football volunteering internship. During the tournament, volunteers worked in such functional areas as accreditation, ticket program, information technology, hospitality (leisure), catering (food), ceremonies, linguistic services, operational marketing, media, arrivals and departures, protocol, work with teams, broadcasting, and sustainable development. So, the trainees were involved in the whole range of customer-oriented services at stadiums and ticketing centers.

**Data Collection Method.** The study was carried out as a sociological in-depth survey. A total of 50 undergraduates, matching criteria of both volunteering for the World Cup and studying advertising and PR, took part in the interviews. The respondents included students aged 18 to 23 years. The volunteer experience of the participants is 1 to 3 years. The majority (70%) have a document containing

records of all the events which is called a personal volunteer book.

Construction of interview guide. The proposed questionnaire contained 26 questions. The questions cover various aspects of volunteer work as part of a mega-event. The questionnaire used a combination of open- and closed-ended questions. The specificity of the questions is that they were based on the list of professional competencies of the chosen Bachelor degree program that meet the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard.

### IV. RESULTS

The results of this research are encouraging for the continued understanding of volunteer internships. Table 1 demonstrates the collected data. Data analysis allows us to conclude that volunteers are active participants in communication processes within the framework of the event project, which corresponds to the model of the volunteer internship (see Fig.1). Immersion of students in the context of real professional activity allows them to make a reasonable choice of which component of professional activity is the most attractive for each of them.

- Information component. 54% answered that documentation preparation skills proved useful to them, and 44% believed that basic text-writing and editing skills were useful to them; 78% of volunteers used information technologies or special software while volunteering. More than half (52%) responded that they had to organize printing of printed products, including printed text or presentation materials.
- Socio-cultural and intercultural components. A total of 84% confirmed that they repeatedly had to answer questions from guests and foreign fans about Russia, its culture or stereotypes. The majority of volunteers (96%) faced with the need for communication in a foreign language during volunteering. 88% answered that social, cultural, ethnic or confessional differences were presented within the volunteer team.
- The management component. 62% of respondents answered that their activities contained management functions of planning, organization, control. The duties of 36% of volunteers included the management of a volunteer team (team leader position); 82% participated in the briefings.
- Specialized component. 76% confirmed that their tasks included the implementation of some professional functions of PR. For example, 80% said that volunteering contained the function of creating and maintaining a corporate image. 48% say that they took part in the advertising or PR campaigns as a volunteer. 92% are convinced that they were engaged in providing external or internal communications. 68% say that they were

involved into the marketing or sociological research during the event.

TABLE 1. THE OPINION OF VOLUNTEERS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE (N=50)

Questionnaire item	Yes, %	No, %	No answer, %
Have you ever answered guests' questions in the face of foreign fans about Russia?	84	14	2
Have you come across the need to communicate in a foreign language during volunteering?	96	4	0
Did the volunteer team have social, cultural, ethnic, or confessional differences?	88	10	2
Did you participate in briefing on the organization of volunteers at the facility?	82	18	0
Did your task include any functions in the field of advertising and public relations?	76	20	4
Did the basic writing and editing skills work?	44	54	2
Did the management functions of planning, organization, control present in your activity?	62	34	4
Did you use information technology, special software in the process of volunteering?	78	22	0
Did your volunteering feature create and maintain a corporate image?	80	18	2
Did your volunteer team manage your responsibilities?	36	64	0
Did documentation preparation skills help you?	54	44	2
As a volunteer, did you take part in the implementation of advertising or PR campaigns?	48	50	2
Did you volunteer to provide external or internal communications?	92	8	0
Did you have to organize printing of printed products, text or presentation materials?	52	48	0
Did the organizers involve you in any marketing or sociological research during the event?	68	30	2

The last question in the questionnaire included a scoring method. The cumulative assessment of the impact of volunteer participation on professional development was 7.2 points out of 10. Students indicated the following FIFA volunteer activities coinciding with their profession: staff communications (oral and written), working with radio channels, informing about the situation in the stadium, interaction with fans, intercultural communication, organizing events, rehearsing, arranging accreditations, planning a schedule, planning a team nutrition plan, writing letters, editing letters the builder, preparing contact lists, printing and laminating documents, preparing a ticket dispensing desk for media, recording the number of media representatives at checkpoints, assistance with access to the stadium for people with disabilities, installing equipment and stands, working in a database, using specialized computer programs.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The modern market imposes on the specialist a whole layer of new requirements: it is necessary to develop education focused on the formation of a creative, socially responsible person in order to increase the competitiveness of human potential, by ensuring the competence approach, the relationship of academic knowledge and practical skills.

On the basis of the data obtained, it can be considered that the acquired experience of volunteering is closely connected with the professional training of students. Most students are convinced that volunteering, which models the context of their future "life in the profession," is one of the fundamentally important factors and conditions relevant to professional self-determination. In this case, the

participation of students in the volunteer movement contributes to the formation of professional competencies and ensures their self-realization in extracurricular activities. Thus, volunteer activities of students, on the example of future advertisers and PR-specialists, can be considered the way of their professional development.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Korsakova, V.V., Zenina, N.N. Formation of individual programs for the development of managerial competencies based on the evaluation of middle managers of a transport company // Internet magazine "Naukovedenie". Vol 7, No 5. 2015. <http://naukovedenie.ru/PDF/225TVN515.pdf>
- [2] Vetitnev, A., Kruglova, M., Bobina, N. The economic dimension of volunteerism as a trend of university research // Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences. – 2015. – № 214. – Pp. 748-757.
- [3] Likhachev, O.N. Features of the competence approach in the context of modernization of Russian higher education // Scientific works of KubGTU, №2, 2016.
- [4] Diprose, K. Critical distance: doing development education through international volunteering. Area, 2012.
- [5] Malashonok, N.G. Student involvement in the educational process: research methodologists and measurement procedure // Sociological Studies. 2014. No. 3. P. 141-147.
- [6] Adler, P.A. and Goggin, J (2005). What Do We Mean By 'Civic Engagement'? Journal of Transformative Education, 3, 236-253.
- [7] Brewis, G. & Russell, J. & Holdsworth, C. Bursting the Bubble: Students, Volunteering and the Community Research Summary. // National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE). November 2010. [https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/bursting\\_the\\_bubble\\_summary\\_report.pdf](https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/bursting_the_bubble_summary_report.pdf)
- [8] Krutitskaya, E.V. Organization of a volunteer center at a higher educational institution from competences to organizational structure. - M.: GBU of the city of Moscow Mosvolonter, 2018. - 162 p.

- [9] Orlova, Yu.V. Volunteering as a means of shaping student social responsibility. *Vestnik SUSU*. 2013. No. 4. V. 5. P. 110 - 113.
- [10] Gerasimova, L.G. Theory and methods of vocational education // *Uchenye zapiski ZabGU. Series: Vocational education, theory and methods of training*. 2012. №6. Pp. 7-11.
- [11] Sturikova, M.V. Formation of the communicative competence of students in the process of debate // *Modern scientific research and innovation*. 2015. № 11. <http://web.snauka.ru/issues/2015/11/59307>
- [12] Drobyshev A.V. Formations of the sociocultural competence of students in the specialty "Advertising and Public Relations" as a means of intercultural communication // *VSTU Bulletin*. - 2013. - V. 9, № 3.2. Pp. 29–31.
- [13] Lough, Benjamin James. International volunteers' perceptions of intercultural competence. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35 (2011). Pp. 452–464.
- [14] Jones, Andrew. Theorizing international youth volunteering: training for global (corporate) work? *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers NS 36* 530–544 2011
- [15] Shkurin D.V. The 2018 World Cup in Youth Assessment and Opinion // *XXI International Conference in Memory of Professor L.N. Kogan "Culture, Personality, Society in the Modern World: Methodology, Experience of Empirical Research"*, 22-23 March 2018, Yekaterinburg. - Ekaterinburg: UrFU, 2018. P. 675-693.