

Volunteering and Employability

What do Scottish employers think?

Context

- Unemployment, youth unemployment;
- Investment in work-like activity; and
- Volunteering viewed as an “answer”.

“predicated on the assumption that volunteering is analogous to paid work” (Lee, 2010)

Definitions

Volunteering

- Volunteering through an organisation or group that is:
 - Unpaid;
 - Of one's own free will; and
 - Of benefit to others.

Employability

	Individual	Wider context
Supply	The knowledge & skills an individual possesses & their attitudes	The way personal attributes are presented in the labour market
Demand	The environmental & social context within which work is sought	The economic context within which work is sought

Research questions

1. What is the role of volunteer-involving organisations as labour market intermediaries?
2. What are the characteristics of volunteering and employability programmes delivered by volunteer-involving organisations?
3. What are employers' views on volunteering in the labour market?

Research sub-questions

- Do employers value volunteering experience?
- Does volunteering experience convey skills?
- Does accreditation enhance volunteering?
- Do volunteer-involving employers behave differently?
- Do employers with personal experience of volunteering behave differently?

Employers (25)

	Small (<50 staff)	Medium (50-249 staff)	Large (250+ staff)
Voluntary Sector	3	1	0
Public Sector	0	1	6
Private Sector	1	3	10

Employers views of volunteering

They associate volunteer with people who:

- want to give;
- want to gain experience;
- have the following characteristics:
 - Selfless, leadership, self-motivated, commitment, integrity and values.

“Volunteering shows a bit about character, you can tell a lot if someone has volunteered” Interviewee I

Do employers value volunteering?

“We look for people who have a passion about their community and a passion about the third sector and volunteering tends to demonstrate that”

Interviewee A, small voluntary sector

“If individuals have an extended period away from work in their CV, then they will be asked about it. If they have been volunteering this demonstrates a desire to work and industrial capability”

Interviewee E, large private sector

Making volunteering relevant

“It would show a real keenness in their chosen area of work, if its related and they have spent time volunteering in their own time, then it is absolutely valuable. For me it would prove their commitment to the role if they were doing that”

Interviewee H, large public sector

“The difficulty comes when the individual struggles to place their volunteering in the employment context, so if they don’t regard it as relevant, they don’t talk about it, and we don’t know about it”

Interviewee A, small voluntary sector

Does volunteering experience convey skills?

“If someone had coaching skills from sport then that would be valuable experience, but charity shop volunteering might not. Running and chairing meetings are transferrable skills”

Interviewee I, large private sector

“If someone was applying to be an Assistant Psychologist for example, but hadn’t been able to find paid work, and so had volunteered, then their experience would count as useful and relevant. The qualifications would be needed alongside this. Volunteering would therefore help an individual in the recruitment for an in-demand job if they hadn’t got paid experience”

Interviewee D, large public sector

Does accreditation enhance volunteering?

“Accreditation would make a difference because it verifies the achievements and confirms a standard of work”

Interviewee D, large private sector

“Accreditation may be viewed by others to be important but when recruiting we are more interested in people who are going to turn up and be committed”

Interviewee C, small voluntary sector

Does accreditation enhance volunteering?

“If you are looking at volunteering in terms of simply an accreditation for the number of hours done, then no it means very little to me other than they have done the hours”

Interviewee A, small voluntary sector

“We wouldn’t look for non-standard accreditation, there can be overkill”

Interviewee E, large private sector

Do employers who involve volunteers behave differently?

- Voluntary and public sector interviewees involved volunteers in their work;
- Voluntary sector employers actively seek volunteering in their recruitment processes;
- Others take into account anything raised by the applicant;
- Voluntary sector organisations are more likely to recruit volunteers from other organisations.

Do employers with personal experience of volunteering behave differently?

- Those who have volunteering experience encourage others to volunteer;
- Some volunteered while in education to enhance their employability;
- As a result they are more likely to have an opinion on volunteering activities;
- However, they have to work within organisational policies and practices.

Conclusions

- Employers find volunteering relevant if the applicant makes it relevant;
- Volunteering shows willingness to work and gain experience;
- The voluntary sector is more receptive to volunteering experience;
- Accreditation divides opinion.