



Provided by the author(s) and University of Galway in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite the published version when available.

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Title | Recruiting and retaining older adult volunteers: Implications for practice |
| Author(s) | Devaney, Carmel; Kearns, Noreen; Fives, Allyn; Canavan, John; Lyons, Rena; Eaton, Pat |
| Publication Date | 2015-10-13 |
| Publication Information | Devaney, Carmel, Kearns, Noreen, Fives, Allyn, Canavan, John, Lyons, Rena, & Eaton, Pat. (2015). Recruiting and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: Implications for Practice. <i>Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing</i> , 27(4), 331-350. doi: 10.1080/10495142.2015.1015373 |
| Publisher | Taylor & Francis |
| Link to publisher's version | https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2015.1015373 |
| Item record | http://hdl.handle.net/10379/7182 |
| DOI | http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2015.1015373 |

Downloaded 2023-09-26T01:57:06Z

Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.



Recruiting and retaining older adult volunteers: implications for practice

Abstract

There is an increased interest in the promotion of volunteering within nonprofit organisations. In this paper organisational supports for recruiting and managing volunteering amongst older adults are explored. The paper describes an intervention comprising an intergenerational reading programme delivered by volunteers in eight schools in the Republic of Ireland. The research draws on qualitative data from a mixed methods research project (2009-2011) which evaluated outcome and process aspects of the reading programme. The qualitative data was collected from a group of older volunteers aged 55+ years. This present study frames the empirical findings within a volunteering framework which involved deductively analysing the data using attributes associated with 'volunteerability' and 'recruitability'. Through this analytical framework a number of features were identified as contributing to greater knowledge of marketing strategies to recruit and retain volunteers within nonprofit organisations. The paper concludes with a set of core practice messages for organisations which rely on volunteers in the delivery of their service.

Key Words: volunteering, older adults, marketing, recruitment, retention, management, nonprofit organisation, practice implications.

Introduction

Volunteering is a communal activity that strengthens the community and helps deliver services that otherwise would have been more expensive or underprovided (Putnam, 2000). The policy trend in advanced capitalist countries is towards promoting volunteering with volunteers seen as a critical resource in nonprofit organisations in particular (Wymer, 2003; Taghian, D'Souza and Polonsky, 2012). Engaging in voluntary work and a willingness to help others is a social orientation and part of the human desire to contribute to society (Meier and Stutzer, 2004). This contribution can be made in both formal and informal ways.

This paper focuses on formal volunteering among older people in the Republic of Ireland. Formal volunteering, defined as 'long-term, planned, pro-social behaviours that benefit strangers and occurs within an organisational setting which has no financial benefit to the volunteer' (Penner, 2002, p.448). Recent policy discourse refers to the continuing challenge for Irish society, as elsewhere, in terms of the low levels of participation in community organisations and volunteering, with lower rates of community involvement by older people specifically highlighted (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007). Although the findings presented in this paper reflect findings of similar studies on volunteering it does develop the concept of how to successfully recruit and retain older volunteers into a nonprofit organisation from a marketing perspective. Specifically it addresses the challenge for nonprofit organisations in delivering a formal and quite technical literacy support programme by older volunteers.

Although still lagging behind commercial organisations in adopting marketing strategies nonprofit organisations are increasingly adopting marketing concepts in an effort to attract and

retain volunteers (Randle and Dolnicar, 2009). However, while there is general agreement that nonprofit organisations now have a greater need to apply marketing strategies there is little agreement on how they should approach this (Pope, Sterrett Isely and Asamo-Tutu, 2009). The paper discusses the types of organisational supports and resources that volunteer's value, and thereby contributes to knowledge with regards to effective marketing strategies for volunteer recruitment, support and management. The article concludes by outlining a set of relevant lessons for practitioners managing voluntary work in the nonprofit sector.

Volunteering among older adults in the nonprofit sector

There are several reasons why volunteering by older adults is of particular salience. The population is ageing and it is predicted that people will conceivably be living one third of their lives after retirement. Older adults make valuable civic contributions through volunteering and such civic engagement is of benefit in terms of promoting successful ageing (Riseborough, 1998). The untapped value of older adults in contemporary society is linked to the prevalence of ageist stereotyping of this population group. Such negativity ignores the social assets and enormous contribution older people make to society by supporting each other and by supporting family and community through, for example, financial means and voluntary work of all kinds (Angus and Reeve, 2006). Counterbalancing the stigma and problematic assumptions about older people are concepts such as active and healthy ageing, and social and human capital. These have become significant policy drivers associated with volunteering amongst older adults in recent years. The term active ageing gained prominence during the 1999 United Nations Year of Older People. It is defined as 'the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation, and

security in order to enhance quality of life as people age', and is a policy response to demographic ageing at an international level (World Health Organisation, 2002).

Various authors have recognised the positive value to society of civic participation through volunteering. Boaz, Hayden and Taylor (2000) associate the term active ageing with meanings such as economic productivity; opportunities for leisure and recreation; political activism; social investment; and engaging older people as partners and givers through volunteering. Riseborough (1998) states that in addition to their frequent caring role, older people make various active civic contributions including volunteering, providing leadership, taking part in political activity, holding family identities, culture and heritage and passing these on to the younger generation. Rowe (2005) discusses successful ageing in terms of building the social capital of older people. Moreover, volunteering in later life not only strengthens civil society and communities, it simultaneously improves the lives of older adults through developing their health assets at an individual and community level (Morgan and Ziglio, 2007, Morrow-Howell, 2010). Advancing health assets in this way has a number of positive outcomes including strengthening the capacity of individuals and communities to realise their potential for contributing to health development whereby this population group are producers of health rather than consumers of health care services (Morgan and Ziglio, 2007).

Recruiting and retaining volunteers

While the body of literature on success factors associated with the initiation and management of volunteering programmes for older adults is expanding (Lee and Brudney, 2008; Randle and Dolnicar, 2009; 2012), the widespread implementation and effects of recommended best practices

in nonprofit organisations remains underdeveloped (Randle and Dolnicar, 2009; Morrow-Howell, 2010). With the increased need for volunteers in the nonprofit sector applied knowledge about volunteering in later life to guide programme initiatives and inform marketing strategies has never been more important (Shields, 2009; Morrow-Howell, 2010). Consequently nonprofit organisations are viewing the recruitment and retention of volunteers as a marketing issue with an associated need for a clear marketing strategy.

Nonprofit organisations are increasingly adopting marketing practices in recruiting and retaining volunteers with the realisation that marketing, rather than being incompatible with their mission, can help improve their performance with respect to their overall goals (Randle and Dolnicar, 2009; 2012). This approach is further strengthened by the realisation that nonprofit organisations (just as for-profit organisations) are operating in a competitive environment. As more organisations seek to recruit volunteers potential volunteers can be more selective in their choices (Randle and Dolnicar, 2009). Although motivation to volunteer is a complex phenomenon (Taghian et al., 2012) it is necessary for the non-profit organisation to include it in their marketing strategy. The challenge is how to identify the right consumer (people most likely to volunteer), attract them (get them started volunteering) and keep them loyal (continue volunteering for as long as possible) (Randle and Dolnicar, 2012). As a result there is a growing interest in the factors that influence volunteer behaviour. This includes the stage at which a volunteer is at in terms of working for an organisation and its impact on their experiences of the volunteering process and overall level of commitment to the organisation. For instance, motivations to start volunteering has been found to differ from motivations to remain a volunteer (Starnes and Wymer, Jr., 2001) and therefore it is important to consider not only how to initially

attract and recruit volunteers, but also how to retain them. The present study aims to provide a nuanced account of what encouraged and supported older adults to volunteer, based on an experiential account from a group of volunteers aged 55 years and over.

Context and Methodology

A number of successful volunteer programmes that mainly engage older people are intergenerational (Lee and Brudney, 2008). This article provides an overview of one such programme – the Wizards of Words (WoW) – which is attempting to address the serious social problem of low levels of child literacy in disadvantaged areas in the Republic of Ireland (Kennedy, 2009). The programme was developed and implemented by Barnardos, a core non-profit organisation in the community and voluntary sector and Ireland’s largest independent children’s charity. Through the educational focus its work, Barnardos is attempting to tackle the persistently low levels of child literacy in particular sections of Irish society, with this problem being almost three times the national average in disadvantaged areas (National Economic and Social Forum, 2009).

The WoW programme was established on a pilot basis in eight city based schools. WoW aims to improve children’s reading skills and help them become better and more confident readers. The programme pairs students aged between 6 to 8 years old who are nominated by their classroom teachers for extra reading support with an older volunteer. WoW takes the form of a formal volunteering programme which is professionally organised, and has workplace-like characteristics, as opposed to informal volunteering usually in the form of one-to-one aid and

care-giving. The volunteers provide individualised reading instruction and support to the children up to three times weekly for 30 minute sessions outside the classroom. The WoW programme was inspired by the Experience Corps programme which has been operating in the United States since 1995 (Morrow-Howell et al., 2009a). It specifically aimed to target older adults and therefore put a minimum eligible entry age of 55 years to join the programme. To date, Experience Corps has demonstrated a number of successful outcomes both in terms of recipients and volunteers (Experience Corps 2005 cited in Lee and Brudney, 2008).

Research Design

The present study is part of a three-year evaluation of the WoW programme which combined a randomised controlled trial (RCT) outcomes study and a process study. The process and outcomes studies were integrated utilising an explanatory mixed methods approach (Creswell and Clark, 2007). Full ethical approval was granted for this research. The data used in this article draws on the experiential accounts of the WoW volunteers based on the qualitative research conducted as part of the process study. The process study explored the introduction, implementation and ongoing organisation of the WoW programme in the participating schools. The experience of all stakeholders participating in WoW was examined incorporating the views of school staff, participating children, WoW volunteers and Barnardos.

Sampling, data collection and participant profile

A total population of all volunteers participating in WoW (n=63) were invited to take part in the process study. For the research reported on in this paper, all volunteers were invited to attend focus groups to discuss their experience of participating in WoW. Four focus groups were held with 34 volunteers comprising 29 females and five males, yielding an overall response rate of 54 per cent. The focus groups were guided by a topic schedule containing a set of open-ended questions which centered in part on the volunteer's experience of recruitment, induction, ongoing support and management within a large nonprofit organisation. The focus groups were audio-recorded, with the participant's permission, and transcribed in full.

Background information received from the participating volunteers revealed that the volunteers ranged in age from fifty-five to seventy-one or over. Most were educated to a high standard, with just over half (53 per cent) completing second level education and over a third (35 per cent) had completed third level. The vast majority (86 per cent) were not currently working in paid employment with a small number working on a part-time basis (13 per cent). The majority of volunteers had previous experience working with children (67 per cent) and just over half had experience in other types of voluntary work (54 per cent).

Analytical framework

A deductive theory driven approach was applied in the analysis of the research findings for the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). In deductive analysis the data is analysed according to an existing framework (Patton, 2002). This process of deductive analysis can also be called testing categories, concepts, models or hypotheses (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The

findings pertaining to the volunteers' experiences on WoW were analysed and presented using the theoretically derived concepts from the relevant literature, the capability of volunteers to volunteer 'volunteerability' (Meijs, Ten Hoorn, and Tschirhart, 2006a; Meijs, Ten Hoorn and Brudney, 2006b; Haski-Leventhal, 2009a), and the ability of organisations to recruit volunteers 'recruitability'(Haski-Leventhal, 2009a; Haski-Leventhal, Meijs and Hustinx, 2010). A framework based on these connected concepts was devised and applied to the data from the focus groups (see Table 1). A coding scheme was then developed based on the characteristics of the theoretical concepts. The coding scheme was then applied to the entire corpus of transcribed text and was rechecked to ensure consistency. Once satisfied that the data was accurately coded patterns and themes were identified and interpreted. The final step in this process involved making inferences and drawing conclusions from the analysed data.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Findings and Discussion

In presenting the findings of this present study, the qualitative data was mapped and discussed according to the subthemes of (i) willingness to volunteer (ii) capability to volunteer (iii) availability to volunteer (iv) accessibility and networking, and (v) resources.

Volunteerability: Willingness to volunteer

In terms of understanding the notion of willingness to volunteer, the discourse on volunteering is characterised by a number of interrelated facets including motives and benefits. Motivations associated with volunteering include utility, altruistic, egoistic and social exchange aspects (Haski-Leventhal, 2009b; Konwerski and Nashman, 2008). Utility is generally discussed in terms of ‘who benefits?’ recipients, givers (volunteers), and/or the community or society at large (Roy and Ziemek, 2000). Altruism, based on concern for the welfare of others and underpinned by a sense of a need to help, is commonly linked to volunteering. Volunteers are also found to exhibit higher levels of emotional empathy than non-volunteers (Wymer, 1999). In addition to altruistic reasons, egoistic motives are also linked to volunteering, with research showing that most people believe that helping others is also a good way to gain self-fulfilment (Musick and Wilson, 2003; Unstead-Joss, 2008). Social exchange is associated with paying back to society in return for the good fortune in one’s life (Wilson, 2000).

When asked about why they were attracted to volunteer on WoW most of the volunteers expressed an interest in working with children. This is similar to the findings of other relevant research which found ‘working with youth’ a common motivation for volunteering among older adults (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2002). In the main, the WoW volunteers were motivated by the opportunity to support children from disadvantaged areas with their reading and instil a sense of confidence and enjoyment in their reading. As one volunteer stated:

I heard the ad on the local radio. It just screamed at me to be answered because I have a friend who is working in a prison, she’s working with them [disadvantaged adults] at the other end. So I said this is so important and I

really thought Barnardos are doing something fantastic. So it just screamed at me, I had to. I didn't really want to, I hadn't the time but I had to.

I always approach it from the point of view; it is the enjoyment of reading. We're trying to get them to read and I think it's by enjoying it, I think that's the big element of it.

Randle and Dolnicar (2012) highlight how volunteering should be promoted as being an opportunity to make a contribution to society by supporting a cause that is of fundamental importance to preserving social values commonly held by the community as a whole. The literature also emphasises that volunteers derive benefits from working for a cause they feel is important (Starnes and Wymar Jr., 2001). In this case literacy support is viewed as a cause which has far reaching benefits for the young children involved. Such gain can clearly be used by as a marketing strategy to recruit volunteers for this specific programme. Matching volunteers to their area of interest or to assignments they particularly enjoy is also noted as a means of reducing turnover rates (Starnes and Wymar Jr., 2001).

The WoW volunteers mentioned a number of extrinsic motives for becoming volunteers, in terms of role replacement, through bereavement and/or having spare time as a result of their children being reared. As Lee and Brudney (2008) point out, engagement in a productive role such as being a volunteer results in role enhancement (Lum and Lightfoot, 2005) and engenders feelings of efficacy and being able to make a difference from having some form of responsibility (Sherrod, Flanagan and Youniss, 2002) as the following quotations highlight:

For me it was about camaraderie when you're living alone at home, with time on your hands now that your children are all gone. I love books myself and I would hate to think somebody would leave school without being competent at reading.

You do what you did with your own children ... it's a big help to the child. It builds their self-esteem, it builds their self-confidence which is really what you're trying to do with these children.

From an altruistic standpoint, benefits of volunteering also accrue from a societal and community perspective. A social exchange or obligation motivation was found amongst most of the WoW volunteers who discussed the desire to give something back to society at this stage in their life. They described how volunteering on the WoW programme provided them with an opportunity to do so by helping disadvantaged children with their reading, as the following quotes illustrate:

All my life I've been lucky, I've sort of got on so well and everything has worked out so well that I thought it was nice when you retire to be able to give something back.

You see there are no books at home either. So you're kind of making up for all of that all of the time which is a huge thing to be making up for.....I feel that we're filling in for what the parents aren't doing.

Volunteerability: Capability to volunteer

The second core facet of volunteerability concerns the capability of the volunteer in terms of possessing the appropriate skills and knowledge (Meijs, Ten Hoorn and Tschirhart, 2006a; Meijs, Ten Hoorn and Brudney, 2006b; Haski-Leventhal, 2009a). The significance of organisational supports for older volunteers in contributing to their role performance has been extensively documented (Wymer, 1999; Tang, Choi E and Morrow-Howell, 2010; Morrow-Howell et al., 2003; Morrow-Howell, Hong and Tang, 2009b). Such support includes training, ongoing support, choice of activity and schedule, and stipends (Tang, Choi E and Morrow-Howell, 2010). A core research finding from this study was the perceived importance of organisational supports received from both Barnardos and the schools with regards to the volunteering experience of the research participants. Another positive supportive aspect highlighted was the participatory approach supported by the organisation whereby the volunteers were provided with various choices and inputs into decisions concerning the programme. Each of these shall now be described in more detail.

In line with the formal aspect of volunteering on the WoW programme, participation was based on the completion of an intensive induction training course facilitated by two WoW programme managers and a volunteer manager from Barnardos over a three-day period. This was supplemented by a further two days training during the school year. The volunteers highlighted the high level of professionalism and quality of both their initial induction training to the

organisation and specifically to the WoW programme, as well as the subsequent training and ongoing ‘on-the-job’ support provided to them. As one volunteer highlighted:

They [Barnardos] took the training very, very seriously. I was extremely impressed. It was very, impressive, that they take the job so seriously and I think it's great. I think it's very well done.

These findings reflect Wymer and Starnes (2001) point that when new volunteers enter training programmes with realistic expectations of the nature of volunteer work, when the training programme is motivating and when new volunteers have social support, attrition rates are reduced substantially. New volunteers need to be given proper supervision, information and social support in order to be successful, remain motivated and receive reward from their service.

A third aspect which positively contributed to the capability to volunteer was the participation by the volunteers in relevant decisions on various aspects of the programme. Such involvement was described as part of the ethos of Barnardos, which ensured that the voices of volunteers were heard and that they felt included in the overall organisation. The research participants described feeling part of the WoW programme and outlined an inclusive process of direct involvement in terms of seeking opinions and providing feedback about the programme and making suggestions about possible developments and changes. As one volunteer put it:

Whenever there are changes to be made or they are updating something they always ask us what we think about it, we're always consulted about it, 'what do

we think?’ That makes you actively part of the whole thing and what we say is always taken on board, always, because we’re the ones that are in the front-line.

Volunteerability: Availability

The final facet of volunteerability centres on the availability of volunteers to commit time to volunteering (Meijs, Ten Hoorn and Tschirhart, 2006a; Meijs, Ten Hoorn and Brudney, 2006b; Haski-Leventhal 2009a). During the development of the WoW programme, Barnardos sought fifteen hours commitment but did not rule out potential volunteers who could not offer that amount of time. This flexibility afforded by Barnardos in terms of the commitment to volunteering over a particular number of hours and days per week was commended by the volunteers. It was noted as a positive factor in their decision to become involved and/or remain involved in the programme. As these volunteers explained:

For me it was the fact that because you are a volunteer, you can pick what time you want to give, your hours, and days, unlike in a job you have to do what’s needed.

So the one thing that allowed me to do it and allowed my mind to let me do it was the fact that I could, if I needed to take a week here and there that somebody would fill in for me. Two days is fine and I have to say I’m delighted I did it. It’s no hassle to me to do my two days and I love meeting everybody.

Up to the point at which this research was conducted, the volunteers were committed to two reading sessions per week equating to approximately ten hours, when travel time and reading session preparation were taken into account. In the main, such time commitment was considered manageable for the volunteers. These findings are particularly positive considering that volunteer burn-out is a serious problem for volunteer managers one of the reasons why organisations have quite high volunteer turnover rates (Wilson 2000; Starnes and Wymar Jr., 2001). As Wymer (1999) notes it is important for volunteer managers to obtain a better understanding of what variables may influence older adult's willingness to volunteers. The more managers know about this population group the better equipped they will be to develop effective marketing strategies to recruit new volunteers, to retain current volunteers, and return former volunteers to active service. The time commitment required and flexibility with this is highlighted in these findings as a key factor in terms of volunteer motivation.

Finally, Musick and Wilson (2003) explain that sustained volunteering over time is associated with internal motivation and could be conceptualised in terms of the idea of attachment to volunteer work. Indicative of the generally positive volunteering experience amongst the research participants was the very low attrition rate, with most volunteers continuing to volunteer on the programme over a number of years. The literature emphasises that those who volunteer on a regular basis are more likely to be more committed to the nonprofit organisation and involved in its overall mission than those who engage in irregular volunteerism (Starnes and Wymar Jr., 2001; Drollinger, 2010). It is also noted that those who volunteer on a regular basis are motivated by particularistic rewards such as developing friendships, social status and relationships with the communities served (Drollinger, 2010).

Recruitability: Accessibility and networking

The second concept in the volunteering framework pertains to the recruitment of volunteers (Haski-Leventhal, 2009a, Haski-Leventhal, Meijs and Hustinx, 2010). One aspect of recruitability is accessibility, both physical and cultural. Interlinked with this is networking and cooperation by nonprofit organisations with other organisations in order to increase accessibility, pool resources, and share knowledge and expertise. Nonprofit organisations rely on their unique cultures to attract volunteers in the first place (National Economic and Social Council, 2005). The socialisation process starts as the potential volunteer initiates contact with the organisation after hearing of it through various sources (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008). In addition, people may feel attracted or drawn to the organisation, based on their perceived image of it (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008). As Starnes and Wymar highlight ‘service organisations’ (organisations that help others or do things for others) tend to attract people (2001).

In terms of networking, Barnardos has the distinct advantage of being a well-known organisation with a positive professional reputation and high media profile and is therefore known to most people in Irish society. It established a regional structure during the late 1990s, and is therefore physically accessible to many throughout the country. It is a non-denominational organisation, and promotes and encourages cultural diversity (Barnardos, 2008). In its recruitment strategy for WoW, Barnardos used its well-recognised brand in order to network with other secular and non-secular organisations (Wilson and Janoski, 1995). Such organisational recognition was found to

be positive in terms of marketing campaigns for recruiting volunteers onto the WoW programme. As Randle and Dolnicar (2009) emphasize organisations need to be aware of their brand image as well as the benefits sought by different groups of potential volunteers. Based on this knowledge customised messages can be developed as part of their marketing strategy to attract volunteers more successfully. Given the competitive nature of the volunteering market it is no longer sufficient to send a generic message to a large heterogeneous mass of potential volunteers. The volunteers explained that they initially heard about WoW through a myriad of sources including: active retirement groups, local church newsletters, local radio, a professional occupational magazine for retired teachers, and word-of-mouth. Additionally, throughout the period of the pilot programme implementation a number of recruitment drives were initiated by Barnardos. Volunteers were recruited from local communities in or close to the regions where the pilot schools were located thereby facilitating physical accessibility. Over the years, the WoW programme has built a series of cooperative links in the delivery of child literacy supports, with good working relationships between Barnardos, school staff and volunteers from local communities piloting WoW. According to the National Economic and Social Forum (2009) such networking and linking is necessary for improving child literacy and social inclusion in the community.

Volunteers described how cultural accessibility was facilitated by Barnardos through the instillation of a participatory culture. At an organisational level the volunteers highlighted how the Barnardos team ensured they felt part of the organisation. Participants pointed out that a range of informal, semi-formal, and formal feedback mechanisms were put in place for volunteers. These included scheduled telephone check-ins and review days with the relevant managers. The

volunteers also received a monthly newsletter to share information and WoW news. The ongoing support, help and advice received from the WoW programme managers and their liaison role with the schools specifically was seen as instrumental in ensuring the WoW volunteers had a positive experience. The volunteers described how their involvement in the programme gave them a sense of purpose and of reward that was hard to achieve when not involved in structured activity. This accessibility enhanced the WoW volunteers level of perceived competence both from a skills and confidence perspective and also in terms of easing their transition into the school environment as the following quotes illustrate:

When [the manager] brought us in she introduced us to all the [school] staff ... We felt that we had a kind of a right to be there, we didn't shuffle in quietly so, that made it easy. They welcomed us and were very appreciative of the fact that we were coming along to help the children, so that was nice.

Any problem we had, we'd come up against a problem you just had to refer it to [the manager]. If I find anything I'll just go to [the manager]. So that's how I got over all the lumps and bumps, let's put it that way.

Cultural accessibility on the part of the volunteers was also promoted by the positive organisational support which was provided at the school level. The welcoming and supportive culture within the organisational settings of the schools was found to be conducive to retaining and improving the capability of the volunteers. A number of volunteers recalled some initial apprehension on working in the formality of the school setting. However, they highlighted the facilitatory nature of the school staff as contributing to their positive experience of volunteering

on the programme. The volunteers described how they were made feel part of the school team and comfortable in the setting as follows:

We are welcomed in schools. They make us feel important, whatever we're doing they make us feel we're great and instead of me being afraid that I'd be dumped with a child, it's absolutely nothing like that and the support for children is brilliant in it.

We were made feel so welcome like from day one. You had really no inhibitions about going in [to the school] and even now if you want to go down and make yourself a cup of tea, they're so welcoming.

Recruitability: Resources

The final aspect of recruitability which nonprofit organisations need to consider is resources, both financial and human. With funding from governments often limited to the more essential public services, volunteering plays a crucial compensatory role in today's society (Mellor et al., 2009). Such trends pertaining to the Irish policy context are highlighted in a report by the National Economic and Social Council (2005) which refers to the professionalisation of community and voluntary organisations and the associated unrealistic standards and levels of service dictated to nonprofit organisations in light of the resources they are given. In the current economic climate, there is a particular risk that volunteerism could encourage governments to withdraw from their basic responsibilities to citizens based on the perception that non-governmental organisations and

human service organisations provide services to populations at a low cost through the use of volunteers (Salamon, Sokolowski and Anheier, 2000). However, volunteering is not free, and organisations and groups which provide services through volunteers require adequate resources and volunteer budgets for recruitment, training, supervision, management and various logistical aspects. The cost of volunteering varies according to the voluntary task in question, with some more formal and structured volunteer programmes ensuing higher costs than other less formal ones.

The WoW programme falls into the former category with significant investment provided by The Atlantic Philanthropies, Ireland to Barnardos for a three year period in order to establish a formal reading support programme. This grant has been used to supply the human and financial resources necessary for the recruitment, training, support, and management of the volunteers. The funding was also used to supply the necessary programme material equipment for the volunteers. One of the anchors of the programme has been the recruitment of two programme managers both of whom had professional educational background to oversee all aspects of WoW. As the pilot schools did not have the capacity to provide the resources required to develop or deliver any additional support programmes the external management of WoW by Barnardos was regarded as a very positive feature of the programme. All volunteers also had immense praise for the work of the WoW programme managers. Their accessibility, the detailed planning and preparation, and the overall level of support received were highlighted as key factors in the ongoing development and implementation of the programme.

'She [programme manager] really is absolutely amazing and the support is fantastic....'

'The first port of call is [programme manager]. She is your manual'.

'The support is phenomenal. I did not expect the level of support that we're getting from [programme manager] and from Barnardos. It's fantastic.....Her [programme manager] support for us volunteers is incredible and she [programme manager] works so well with the [school] principal and the staff, they're all brought on board. So we are welcomed in schools'

Furthermore, an informal system of experienced volunteers assuming increased responsibility in the delivery of WoW developed over time. As the programme became more established Barnardos arranged for the more experienced WoW volunteers to meet with newly recruited volunteers to share their knowledge and understanding of WoW. This was described by newer volunteers as a reassuring experience having a positive impact on their confidence, giving a sense of *'if they can do it then so can we'*. Such support and expertise in turn helps build organisational commitment and retention, characteristics of which include working hard for the organisation, intention to stay, and identification with the organisation's goals (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008).

Limitations

A limitation of the research used in this article is that it is of a small scale and urban nature involving the experiential accounts of a total of 34 older adults volunteering in eight city based schools. The frame of reference is based only on the Republic of Ireland. Also, the low number of

males relative to the females participating is also a limitation however this reflects the gender divide within the volunteers on the WoW programme. An additional limitation is that this data represents the voice of the participating WoW volunteers only. It does not address the reasons why older people do not get involved in volunteering in programmes such as this or other initiatives, or why older people commence volunteering but then discontinue. These limitations should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings and conclusions of this study. However, notwithstanding such limitations and the specific context of this study, there is the possibility of ‘transferability’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of core messages from this research to other comparable nonprofit organisations who work with volunteers.

Conclusion

Nonprofit organisations suffer from a shortfall of both human and financial resources and rely on the volunteers as a valuable resource in delivering their service (Shields, 2009). When the benefits of volunteering are ignored, individual passions can diminish and volunteers fade away (Pope et al., 2009). Therefore, a clear strategy for the recruitment, training, management and support of volunteers are core considerations for nonprofit organisations. This article has sought to understand more about the core components associated with the volunteering process from the experiential perspective of older adult volunteers through the application of the concepts of ‘volunteerability’ and ‘recruitability’. In doing so, it has attempted contribute to the broader body of knowledge of successful volunteer recruitment and retention practices within nonprofit organisations. The paper concludes by illuminating some important applied practice implications for organisations which face this challenge on a continual basis.

An important implication arising from this research relates to the profile and image of nonprofit organisations seeking to recruit and sustain volunteers. The organisation on which this study was based, namely Barnardos, has a high profile and is a well-regarded and important advocate and provider in the field of children's services in Irish society. Because of this positive reputation, Barnardos had an advantage in initially attracting a potential pool of volunteers and pilot schools to participate in the WoW programme. Such widespread recognition and positive organisational identity are important marketing factors in facilitating the recruitment, sustainment, and commitment of volunteers to an organisation.

Positive accounts of organisational socialisation were given by the WoW volunteers in terms of the induction, formal training, on-going support, and their sense of inclusion in the settings of both the organisation in which they volunteered (Barnardos), and the schools where they tutored the children. Recognition of these supportive factors is important in contemporary society as organisations strive to recruit volunteers to meet significant requirements for service (Konwerski and Nashman, 2008; Randle and Dolnicar, 2012). The research also found that volunteers welcomed the opportunity afforded by Barnardos to provide feedback and participate in decisions concerning the WoW programme. Such an empowering approach relates to the benefits of reciprocal exchange between the volunteers and the organisation for which they are volunteering (Konwerski and Nashman, 2008). Commitment to the cause the organisation supports and volunteer treatment are key factors in participation quality. Nonprofit organisations need to support activities that maintain, affirm and encourage volunteers (Craig- Lees, Harris and Wilson, 2008). In terms of timing, the kinds of supports volunteers need at the initial phase of volunteering in an organisation are likely to differ from those needed at later stages, hence the

continuum of support is critical in order to retain volunteers. This is in line with Haski-Leventhal and Bargal's (2008) contention that a new theory is needed to describe the socialisation process of volunteers in nonprofit organisations, whereby an explanation of what happens in each stage and what may cause the transition to the next one is outlined. One aspect which could be associated with the successful retention by Barnardos of all its volunteers on the WoW programme for subsequent years of service is the flexibility provided both in terms of time commitment and voluntary substitution. It is crucial that volunteers are comfortable that they can manage the workload which they commit to, and do not feel over-burdened. The success of a volunteer/nonprofit organisation relationship hinges on the mutual satisfaction of both the volunteer's and the organisation's needs (Beerli, Diaz and Martin, 2004). This paper affirms the view that a clear marketing strategy for nonprofit organisations is to remind volunteers that the organisation needs their expertise in order to ensure continued success (Craig-Lees et al., 2008). It must also be remembered that recruitment and retention enhance each other. Excellent recruitment practices improve retention thereby reducing the need for further recruitment (Wymer and Starnes, 2001).

Finally, the availability of resources on the part of voluntary organisations is a fundamental sustainability factor with regards to volunteering. The delivery of public goods, regardless of the organisational status of the deliverer, requires both financial and human resources. This paper suggests that it is important that the current trend regarding the promotion of volunteering does not result in government pulling back and reducing their resourcing of the nonprofit sector. Rather, it is a question of acting differently and in a way that ensures balance, partnership and overlap (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007) between statutory and non-statutory bodies. In

this regard, volunteering should be considered as only one of a range of options rather than a cure-all for the threatening care-deficit in contemporary society (Lie, Baines and Wheelock, 2009).

References

- Angus R. & Reeve P. (2006) Ageism: A Threat to 'Aging Well' in the 21st Century. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 25 (2), 137-152.
- Barnardos (2008). *Barnardos' training and resource service information pack*. URL http://www.barnardos.ie/assets/files/information-pack/barnardos_information_pack_nov_08.pdf [accessed 28/2/2011].
- Beerli A., Diaz G. & Martin J. D. (2004). The behavioural consequences of self-congruency in volunteers. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 9, 28-48.
- Boaz A., Hayden C. & Taylor F. (2000). Active Ageing - Putting Policy into Practice. Implications of the BGOP/RSVP Older Volunteers Initiative Evaluation. Local Government Centre University of Warwick: Warwick.
- Craig-Lees M., Harris J. & Wilson L. (2008). The Role of Dispositional Organizational and Situational Variables in Volunteering, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 19 (2), 1-24.
- Creswell J. & Plano Clark V. L. (2007). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Sage Publications: London.
- Drollinger T. (2010). A Theoretical Examination of Giving and Volunteering Utilizing Resource Exchange Theory, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 22(1), 55-66.
- Haski-Leventhal D. & Bargal D. (2008). The volunteer stages and transitions model: organisational socialisation of volunteers. *Human Relation*, 61 (1), 67-102.
- Haski-Leventhal D. (2009a). *Addressing Social Disadvantage Through Volunteering*. The Centre for Social Impact, Australian School of Business, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

- Haski-Leventhal D. (2009b). Elderly volunteering and well-being: a cross-European comparison based on SHARE data. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations*, 20 (4), 388-404.
- Haski-Leventhal D., Meijs L. & Hustinx L. (2010). The third-party model: enhancing volunteering through governments, corporations and educational institutes. *Journal of Social Policy*, 39 (1), 139-158.
- Kennedy E. (2009). *Improving Literacy in a Disadvantaged School: a Research-based Approach*. St Patrick's College, Dublin.
- Konwerski P. A. & Nashman H. W. (2008). Philanthropy: a benefit for personnel and organisations managing volunteers (volunteer therapy). *Voluntary Action: The Journal of the Institute for Volunteering Research*, 9 (1), 46-59.
- Lee Y. J. & Brudney J. L. (2008). The impact of volunteering on successful ageing: A review with implications for programme design. *Voluntary Action: Journal of the Institute of Volunteering Research*, 9 (1), 21-35.
- Lie M., Baines S. & Wheelock J. (2009). Citizenship, volunteering and active ageing. *Social Policy and Administration*, 43 (7), 702-718.
- Lincoln Y. & Guba E. (1985). *Naturalistic enquiry*. Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA.
- Lum T. Y. & Lightfoot E. (2005). The effects of volunteering on the physical and mental health of older people. *Research on Ageing*, 27, 31-55.
- Marshall C. & Rossman G.B. (1995) *Designing qualitative research*. Sage Publications, London.
- Meier S. & Strutzer A. (2004). Is volunteering rewarding in itself? IZA Discussion Paper No. 1045; Zurich IEER Working Paper No. 180. Retrieved from: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=505042>

Meijs L., Ten Hoorn E. M. & Brudney J. L. (2006b). Improving societal use of human resources: From employability to volunteerability. *Voluntary Action: Journal of the Institute of Volunteering Research*, 8, 36-54.

Meijs L., Ten Hoorn E. M., Tschirhart M. & Brudney J. L. (2006a) *The effects of corporate volunteering on volunteerability*. Paper presented at the invitational conference by CIVIC and RSM Erasmus University, B-SM Department on the Future of Volunteering. September 7th, 2006, Rotterdam, Netherlands.

Mellor D., Hayashi Y., Stokes M. (2009). Volunteering and its relationship with personal and neighborhood well-being. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38 (1), 144-159.

Miles M. B. & Huberman A. M. (1994). An expanded sourcebook qualitative data analysis, Second ed. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California.

Morgan A. & Ziglio E. (2007) Revitalising the evidence base for public health: an assets model, *Promotion & Education* (Supplement 2), 14, 17-22.

Morrow-Howell N. (2010). Volunteering in later life: research frontiers. *The Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 65B (4), 461-469.

Morrow-Howell N., Hinterlong J., Rozario P. A. & Tang F. (2003). Effects of volunteering on the well-being of older adults. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 58B (3) S137-S145.

Morrow-Howell N., Jonson-Reid M., McCrary S., Lee Y. & Spitznagel E. (2009a). *Evaluation of Experience Corps - student reading outcomes*. Center for Social Development, Washington University, St. Louis, MO.

Morrow-Howell N., Hong S.-I. & Tang F. (2009b). Who benefits from volunteering? Variations in perceived benefits *The Gerontologist* 49 (1), 91-102.

- Musick M. & Wilson J. (2003). Volunteering and depression: The role of psychological and social resources in different age groups. *Social Science and Medicine* 56 (2), 259-269.
- National Economic and Social Council (2005). *NESC Strategy 2006: People, productivity and purpose*. National Economic and Social Development Office NESDO, Dublin.
- National Economic and Social Council (2009). *Well-being matters: A social report for Ireland, Volume II, No.119*. National Economic and Social Development Office NESDO, Dublin.
- Patton M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Penner, L., A., (2002). Dispositional and organisational influences on sustained volunteerism: An interactionist perspective, *Journal of Social Issues*, 58, 447-467.
- Peter D. Hart Research Associates (2002). *The new face of retirement: An ongoing survey of American attitudes on ageing*. Civic Ventures, San Francisco, CA.
- Pope J., Sterrett Isely., E & Asamoah-Tutu., F. (2009). Developing a Marketing Strategy for Nonprofit Organizations: An Exploratory Study, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 21 (2), 184-201,
- Putnam R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster, New York.
- Randle M., & Dolnicar, S. (2009). Does Cultural Background Affect Volunteering Behaviour? , *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 21(2), 225-247.
- Randle M., & Dolnicar, S. (2012). Attracting Volunteers in Highly Multicultural Societies: A Marketing Challenge, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 24(4), 351-369.

Riseborough M. (1998). *From consumerism to citizenship: New European perspectives on independent living in older age*. The Housing for Older People in Europe (HOPE) Network, London.

Rowe, J. (2005) *The new gerontology: implications and strategies for an aging society*. Speech at the 58th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America Conference: Dallas, TX.

Roy K. & Ziemek, S. (2000). *On the economics of volunteering*, ZEF-Discussion Papers on Development Policy 31. Center for Development Research, University of Bonn, Bonn.

Salamon L., Sokolowski S. & Anheier H. (2000) *Social origins of civil societies: An overview*. The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. M.A.

Sherrod L. R., Flanagan C. & Youniss L. (2002). Dimensions of citizenship and opportunities for youth development: the what, why, when, where, and who of citizenship development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6 (4), 264-272.

Shields P. O. (2009). Young Adult Volunteers: Recruitment Appeals and Other Marketing Considerations, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 21(2), 139-159.

Starnes B.J. & Wymer W.W Jr. (2001). Conceptual Foundations and Practical Guidelines for Retaining Volunteers Who Serve in Local Nonprofit Organisations. Part II, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 9 (1)2, 97-118.

Taghian M., D'Souza C. & Polonsky C. (2012). A Study of older Australians' Volunteering and Quality of Life: Empirical Evidence and Policy Implications, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 24 (2), 101-122.

Tang F., Choi E. & Morrow-Howell N. (2010). Organisational support and volunteering benefits for older adults. *The Gerontologist*, 50 (5), 603-612.

Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007) *The concept of active citizenship*. The Stationary Office, Dublin.

Unstead-Joss R. (2008). An analysis of volunteer motivation implications for international development. *Voluntary Action: Journal of the Institute of Volunteering Research* 9 (1), 3-20.

Walter W. Wymer Jr. DBA (1999). Understanding Volunteer Markets: The Case of Senior Volunteers, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 6(2)3, 1-23.

Wilson J. & Janoski T. (1995). The contribution of religion to volunteer work. *Sociology of Religion* 56 (2), 137-152.

Wilson J. (2000) Volunteering. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 215-40.

World Health Organization (2002) Active Ageing A Policy Framework. WHO, Geneva.

Wymer, W. W. (2003). Differentiating literacy volunteers: A segmentation analysis for target marketing, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 8, 267-285.