

## CONCEPTUAL BASES OF REGIONAL VOLUNTEERS' MANAGEMENT AS HUMAN RESOURCES

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### **Abstract**

This article is dedicated to development of an effective approach to volunteering governance in a region. The study focuses on the Russian volunteers as a social community. Capabilities of public administration of volunteering development is investigated by case-study realized in the Sverdlovsk region. The regional volunteering management system, its basic stakeholders and objective description of regional volunteers' community are described according to a survey of volunteers, expert interviews of regional NGO leaders and public officials. The analysis shows that volunteers can be considered as a resource of the regional management, however, volunteers as a social community have their specific resources. The research methodology is based on the theory of cross-sectoral interaction and the stakeholder theory. We assume that the resources of volunteer social community should be taken into consideration in the process of regional management, also we should focus on the capabilities and interests of the volunteer social community members. The regional executive authority can influence volunteers by stakeholders. The third sector plays the most important part in this process: it should involve and integrate people, business, media, social service agencies, educational institutions and local governments. The article proposes a conceptual framework for regional volunteering management.

**Key words:** volunteering, the regional volunteering management, public policy, cross-sectoral interaction, volunteers' social community.

**JEL Code:** H70, R58.

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### **Introduction**

Volunteering is a global social, political, economic and cultural phenomenon. Nowadays the volunteer movement is world-wide, the number of volunteers is only increasing (World Giving Index...). Volunteers as a human resource have a certain knowledge, abilities, skills which meet the needs of society. Volunteers make the significant contribution to economic and social development of their countries, directly help people in need, solve particular

problems. However, in different countries there are different conditions for volunteers, and volunteering develops in different ways. For instance, international differences on volunteer rates smooth with the introduction of national context (government expenditures on social issues and GDP) (Gil-Lacruz & Marcuello, 2013).

Currently Russian volunteering is at the stage of institutional development, it gets involved in internal economic and political processes. "Special way" of the country's evolvement, transition from socialism to capitalism, from command-administrative to market economy define historical caused volunteering originality within national borders. The ideology of paternalism dominates Russian citizens' consciousness in many spheres of society life, the leading role is assigned to authority and public administration. Concerning Russian volunteering, we could emphasize the imperfection of volunteering development state support system at all levels of management (from federal to local). In the article we estimate the possibilities of modeling regional volunteers' management. One of the regional policy priority directions in the Russian Federation is creating human resources management system; volunteers belong to such human resources as well. In our opinion, this problem demands not only practical solution but also its theoretical interpretation.

## **1 Theoretical background**

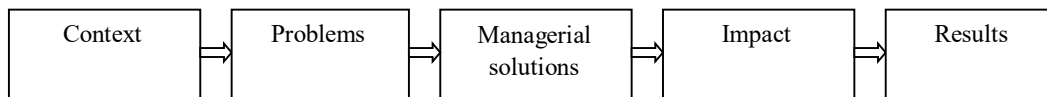
Theoretically, volunteering in different areas is determined not only by the individual characteristics of the people living there but also «by the organizational and institutional environment» (Healy, 2004). T. Rotolo and J. Wilson, analysing theories of volunteering, state that without the correct institutional context—appropriate laws, tax incentives, government offices, and policies, and so on—the nonprofit sector will languish. Without a robust nonprofit sector, few volunteers will be mobilized (Rotolo & Wilson, 2012). The institutional context of volunteering is connected with cross-sectoral interaction. There are different points of view. According to the first, the third sector as an element of civil society is defining in the interaction. The greater the social and organizational capacity to mobilize volunteering, the greater the scale of volunteering (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2003). According to the second point of view, state could influence volunteering: indirectly through creation of a stable macroeconomic situation in the country (low rates of inflation, unemployment, etc.) (Hackl et al. 2012); directly through creation of the third sector support programs, based on the concept of voluntary failure and experience of the countries leading in volunteering (USA), and support of local initiatives (Salamon, 1987).

The problem of self-organization and managing Russian citizens' civic engagement at the local level is outlined in both theoretical and practical terms. Volunteers act as an object of such management. We assume that in a certain Russian region volunteers can act as a resource and possess a resource as a community. The importance and the role of volunteers must be taken into account.

Being guided by the stakeholder theory, we consider government institutions, the third sector (NGOs, executives, managers and other employees of NPOs, funders, suppliers/contractors, organizational partners), commercial sector, mass media, educational institutions as the subjects (actors) of such management (Puyvelde et al. 2011). In our opinion, community and local associations start playing the part of particular importance.

According to our approach, (1) we will identify the problems complicating system development of volunteering, corresponding to the context of our region; (2) we will review approaches to managing these problems, having defined the roles of various stakeholders in these processes; 3) we will bring influence methods in line with specific conditions of the region on the basis of maximizing positive and minimizing negative effects (Zeithaml et al. 1988); 4) we will develop volunteer management effectiveness indicators in the region according to the chosen methods of influence and the emphasised situational problems. We consider that knowing situation conditions (the situational leadership theory) and profile of local volunteering community allows to develop regional volunteering management model, to coordinate volunteers' actions, to create conditions for different volunteering activities. The analysis logic is presented in fig. 1. We will present the results of case-study within Sverdlovsk region.

**Fig. 1: Analysis model**



Source: author's model

## 2 Data and methods

The article shows the results of analysing official documents, local laws, regional executive authorities' programs and social policy statistical reports. The case includes the data of Sverdlovsk region volunteers survey (N=1208, 2014). There is no official statistics on volunteering in Russia. The sample model for volunteers of the region is constructed according to the results of the Russian nationwide poll data of Public Opinion Research

Foundation (data on the number of volunteers in the cities with population exceeding 1 million people) and reflects the criteria of general population: age, sex, engagement in NGO. The sample includes 56% of women and 44% of men. The percentage of young people of 18-30 years old equals 31,5%, 21 to 45 years old – 30,3%, 46 to 60 years old – 27,5%, over 61 years old – 13,7%. 57% of respondents have higher education, 19% are undergraduates, 16% have secondary vocational education, 8% got only general secondary education. We analyse the data of expert interviews of NPO and NGO chief executives in Sverdlovsk region (N=22). Secondary data of documentary sources and primary data of qualitative and quantitative researches allowed to realise methodology triangulation and a triangulation of the research data. In the first part of the research we give some important characteristics of a Sverdlovsk region volunteer community as an object of management. In the second part we give an assessment to a regional institutional context of volunteering, describe characteristics of the main stakeholders, emphasise problems and propose managerial solutions.

### **3 Results**

#### **3.1 Some characteristics of Sverdlovsk region volunteer community**

According to the report of Sverdlovsk region Public Chamber (2012) titled "About state and development of civil society", there are more than 100 thousand volunteers in the region. As reported by Sverdlovsk region Ministry of Physical Culture, Sports and Youth Policy, by the beginning of 2014 more than 340 volunteer groups had been included in NGOs, and there had become more than 99500 volunteers (2,3% of the region's population). It is an average value of volunteers' number throughout different territorial entities of the Russian Federation which shows low activity of volunteers in NGOs, low population engagement in volunteering. In Russia organized (formal) volunteering is less prevailing than informal, unorganized forms (individual, among friends, within initiative groups) (Voluntary movement .., 2012). Despite the absence of statistical data, experts note that there is a Russian nationwide trend of informal volunteering prevalence in the region.

#### **3.2 The data of our survey**

We will characterise the main types of volunteer activity in the region. Answering a question: "What do you usually do as a volunteer?", respondents could choose several alternatives. 60% help marginalised and excluded people; 43% are engaged in event volunteering, 46% give professional help (accounting, legal assistance, fundraising, work with documents), 18% help

with the organization of political action and election campaigns, 17% are involved in ecological projects, 15% keep civil order, 11% help homeless animals, 2% helped to overcome the consequences of natural disasters.

The community includes "formal volunteers" working in NGOs and "informal volunteers" who give free aid on their own. We will study regularity of volunteer activity and plans to continue volunteering in the future. The answers to the questions "Do you have experience in NGO?" and "Do you plan to continue volunteering?" are presented to tables 1,2.

**Tab. 1: Regularity of “formal” and “informal” volunteer activity (Cramer's V – 0,407)**

Choice alternatives	Groups of volunteers		Whole community, %
	Formal	Informal	
At least 2 times a month	32	5,5	19
2-5 times a year and more	48,5	43,5	46
1-2 times a year	19,5	51	35
Total	100	100	100

Source: author's calculation

**Tab. 2: Volunteers about their plans to continue volunteering**

Choice alternatives	Whole community, %
Yes	28
Likely	35
Unlikely	17
No	10
Cannot say	10
Total	100

Source: author's calculation

Every third (32%) "formal volunteer" regularly do voluntary work. Six times less (5,5%) "informal volunteers" do the same. Every second respondent (48,5%) with experience in NGO works as a volunteer from time to time, every fifth (19,5%) participated in volunteer projects 1-2 times for the last year, while among informal volunteers this alternative was chosen by 51% of respondents. It is possible to conclude that regional institutional environment of the third sector promotes the raise of volunteer activity and its regularity.

The remarkable thing is that 28% of respondents are sure to continue volunteering, almost every third (35%) would rather do that. 17% of respondents are unlikely to continue

working as volunteers, every tenth (10%) from all those, who took part in our poll, doesn't see volunteering as a future plan. The "plans to continue volunteering" variable closely correlates with "plans to work in NGO" (Cramer's V 0,609) and the "experience in NGO" variable (Cramer's V 0,407). Among "formal" volunteers 76% of respondents are going to continue volunteering, 28% less "informal" volunteers have the same plans. Among those who plan not to give up volunteering, 75% of respondents plan to work for NGOs, 17% don't plan to do that, 8% found it difficult to answer. Among the volunteers, who don't plan to continue volunteering, only 16% consider working for NGOs possible, 78% of respondents don't, 6% found it difficult to give an answer to the question. Our data proves that third sector sphere is optimal for stimulation of volunteering development in Sverdlovsk region.

## **4 Regional specifics of volunteering**

### **4.1 Analysis of the situation**

4 327 472 people live in Sverdlovsk region, among them 84,3% are urban residents, the ratio of economically active population is about 53%. There are 94 municipalities within the region's territory. Mining, metallurgical and mechanical engineering industries dominate in the region (Federal State Statistics Service ...).

Legal regulation of volunteering in the region is carried out indirectly only through stimulation of socially oriented NGOs. At the federal level strategic documents for volunteering development were elaborated in 2009. Under the conditions of undeveloped third sector and "civil society" both generally in Russia and in the analyzed region, the part of the key stakeholder defining volunteer policy should be played by regional government institutions. In our opinion, the first problem is that there is no volunteering development strategy at the regional level. At the municipality level volunteering isn't legislatively regulated. For solving this problem we propose legal context managerial solution, connected with developing regional strategy of management and development of volunteering and NGO as a local volunteering provider. To achieve results, this managerial solution should be publicly discussed among volunteers, in various regional organizations, presented and covered by regional mass media.

The regional comprehensive programme of supporting NGOs is regulated by different economic and financial departments, there is no substantial system coordination between particular regional ministries, departments and organizations giving support to development of the volunteer movement. There is no organizational volunteer network. 12 resource centers

on the basis of educational institutions and cultural organizations as well as 20 centers affiliated with local and regional government institutions are declared in the region. Experts note that despite such official events as "Charity week", etc., initiated by the authorities, different volunteer organizations don't interact. NGOs' requests often remain unanswered, and the centers solve problems of only those organizations they are affiliated with. The research revealed the second problem – lack of strategic and system management features testifying lack of cross-sectoral interaction. Creation of the network (organizational, infrastructural, informational) demands the key coordinator among the regional ministries. The second managerial solution (an organizational, infrastructure context) implies existence of regional institution, responsible for the realization of coordinating, resource distributing, informational functions and also decisions on tactical events within regional strategy.

#### **4.2 Region's third sector: quantitative and qualitative characteristics**

There are more than 6 800 NGOs – veteran, trade-union, youth, religious, national and cultural, etc. - within the region. According to expert opinion, less than 10% really work. For both regional and Russian NGOs the problem of different resource shortage is typical: professional resources (lack of NGO staff's knowledge and skills, necessary for effective work), financial resources (shortage of funds for the organization of primary activities and informational work aimed at involving volunteers, gaining physical and human resources (Voluntary movement...)). The third situational problem is resource limitation and undeveloped third sector of the region. The proposed managerial solution implies developing system of the measures aimed at increasing the number of truly operating NGOs and improving the quality of their performance as well as assistance to active involvement of volunteers and philanthropists in their activity.

#### **4.3 Regional sector of economy**

Sverdlovsk region is an industrially developed region with a great number of large plants and industrial enterprises which donated 6 billion 988 million rubles for charity in 2013 (The state and development ...). Experts emphasised that corporate volunteering wasn't widespread within the region but it was the most productive. From their point of view, the responsibility level of those people who are already united by other purposes (not volunteering) is much higher. Volunteer activity is usually provided with the resources of their organization. There is official data on corporate volunteering in the region. Corporate volunteering exists but the enterprises don't use it for their promotion of CSR. The fourth

situational problem is undeveloped corporate volunteering in the region. The proposed managerial solution implies the development of corporate volunteering regional concept as a promotion tool for the enterprises of the region, welfare work technology, educational activity aimed at younger generation.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of different countries' experience in volunteering management shows that the main part is assigned to the state. Our research demonstrates the role of regional governmental institutions which should have certain ideas (up-to-date) and realize managerial solutions aimed at using these ideas. In this context the population, volunteers in particular, gain new skills and human capital assets, taking part in volunteer activity (Jaunmuktane, 2012). In keeping with the features of volunteer community of the region, nowadays working with them within the NGO sector seems to be the most suitable format. Nearly a half of all the formal volunteers work and are ready to work as volunteers from time to time. For most of "informal volunteers" are also prone to irregular volunteer work and its contextuality.

It is proposed to realize volunteer management within a certain constituent entity of the Russian Federation through regional development of the third sector. For this purpose it is necessary to develop operating NGOs and provide them with resources, to create conditions for informal volunteering institutionalization by entrenching new civic initiatives in the third sector, to stimulate various organizations' (commercial, educational, cultural, etc.) staff involvement into these processes. Project development of the directions necessary for the region; goal setting for the third sector; resource support of these directions, methodical and informational maintenance ought to be included in regional volunteering development strategy.

Regional level managerial solutions should contain:

- elaborating strategic legal documents aimed at the development of regional volunteering;
- regional organizational volunteer networks as well as regional and local resource centers integration; appointment of the coordinator of the integration;
- development and stimulation of corporate volunteer experience in business environment, educational and cultural spheres through social partnership with regional NGOs;
- promotion and support for project forms of volunteer activity of different social groups at the level of the region, its certain territories, municipalities and city areas for the purpose of civil participation form diversification;



- arrangement of resource support to spontaneous volunteer initiatives of the population;
- regional mass media publicity for strategy and tactics of volunteering development within the region.

The following is considered as effectiveness indicators for the realisation of the proposed managerial solutions: "the number of volunteers working on a regular basis within the region"; "volunteers' economic contribution"; "the number of social institutions whose activity volunteers participate in"; "the number of the organizations and teams taking part in volunteering"; "the number of programmes aimed at the development of volunteering in the region"; "the number of spontaneous civil initiatives realized in the third sector"; "the number of regional volunteer experience media mentions"; "the number of volunteer groups within social networks"; "the number of events popularizing volunteering in the region"; "the amount of content placed on official governmental Internet portals"; "the number of child, youth, student educational projects dedicated to volunteering".

To conclude, we will notice that the economic, political, social situation is changing, so are the interests and opportunities of the population. Management problem of the territories is to consider these changes. On one hand, there are global tendencies concerning volunteering. On the other hand, there always exists cultural specifics caused by the institutional environment, traditions, community features, etc. In our opinion, volunteering development management in a certain Russian region demands taking into account a resource of volunteers, being focused on the opportunities and interests of volunteer community members. Regional governmental institutions ought to influence all stakeholders through enhancement of the third sector which should attract, integrate economic sector, mass media, social and educational institutions, local government into volunteering development.

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