

Activating the Volunteer Work Mindset among University Students for Participation in Global Events in the State of Qatar

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From left: Dr. Abdelazeem Sabry, Sarah Al-Noubani, Shahad Al-Jassim, and Nouf Al-Jassim.

Introduction

University education is one of the most important means of confronting changes and challenges. It prepares individuals for a successful social life, enabling them to participate in decision-making and address the problems facing society effectively. The current era is marked by numerous complexities and challenges, making it essential to instill a mindset of volunteerism in the youth—an effort that cannot be postponed or delayed.

This was emphasised by the Qatari Ministry of Education and Higher Education in its strategy over the years, where its vision and mission incorporate the principle of community participation in the educational process to achieve high-quality education. The strategy also outlined in its summary that the primary goal of the State of Qatar is to establish a high-quality educational system that effectively contributes to society, reinforces the values of the Qatari community, and equips all learners with a diverse range of skills. In its intermediate outcomes—specifically in its first element—it stressed providing diverse learning opportunities that enable learners to enhance their abilities to contribute effectively to Qatari society. (Education and Higher Education, 2017).

Research Problem

The UN Report 2018 indicated that the Arab world has 8.9 million volunteers, which does not exceed 3% of the total population, while in the United Kingdom alone, the volunteer rate is about 30% of the population and 22% in New Zealand (UN Volunteers, 2018). Moreover, as the State of Qatar hosts numerous regional and global events across various economic, social, cultural, and sports fields, there is a continuous need for volunteers.

Research Objective

To prepare and propose a comprehensive, unified vision for the entire volunteer work system at Qatar University — including students, faculty, administration, and partners — and then implement organisational procedures for volunteer work within the University.

Significance of the Research

Its importance lies in that it may benefit each of the following:

- **Volunteer Stakeholders' work in Qatar:** It provides an effective means of managing volunteer work.
- **Students:** It contributes to the enhancement of the students' volunteering skills.
- **Teachers:** It assists the teachers in employing

effective strategies to encourage either themselves or their students to participate in volunteer work.

- **The Administration:** It enables administrators to precisely define their roles in volunteer work.
- **Partners:** It helps civil society organisations understand their roles in volunteer work.

Research Procedures

The research was conducted as follows:

- A. Review of the literature and previous studies related to volunteer work associated with the following elements:
 - Volunteer work theories.
 - University youth and volunteering.
 - Successful experiences.
- B. Examining the reluctance of university students to participate in volunteering.
- C. Preparing a questionnaire (developed by the researchers) to identify the reasons for this reluctance.
- D. Presenting the questionnaire items to a group of experts.
- E. Developing the proposed vision based on the preliminary results of the questionnaire.
- F. Presenting the proposed vision to a group of experts to gather their opinions and modify it according to their recommendations.
- G. Analysing and interpreting the data, extracting and explaining the results.
- H. Reaching conclusions, recommendations, and proposals.

Expected Benefits of the Research Concerning Volunteer Work in the State of Qatar

This research is expected to help achieve learning outcomes that motivate students to serve their community in both scientific and practical ways. Additionally, it prepares students intellectually to embrace a culture of volunteering and to integrate it into their lives, ensuring they are ready to engage in any volunteer work required of them. This aligns with the Qatar National Vision 2030, which, under its human development dimension, states: "Developing and empowering the residents of the State of Qatar to build a thriving society" (Amiri Decision No. 44 of 2008).

Research Results and Interpretation

The research reached the following conclusions:

1. **Development of a Volunteer Work Philosophy:** The proposed vision adopted the following objectives:

- **Opportunities for Participation:** Providing opportunities for all students regardless of their financial or personal circumstances.
- **Flexibility:** Activating volunteer work by the conditions available to students.
- **Effectiveness:** Utilizing volunteer work in the best possible manner.
- **Innovation:** The necessity to present volunteer work innovatively and creatively.

2. Description of the Competencies Required for Participants in the Educational Process Within the University to Activate the Volunteer Work Mindset:

- **Students:** University students should have:
 - Time to engage in volunteer work both within and outside the University.
 - Sufficient information about volunteer work, its importance, and its objectives for themselves and their community.
 - Moral recognition upon completion of the volunteer work in which they participated.
 - The opportunity to choose among various volunteer activities.
- **Faculty:** University teachers should have:
 - An appreciative mindset towards students participating in volunteer work.
 - A willingness to participate in volunteer work themselves to motivate their students.
 - Continuous communication with volunteer students to encourage them and offer assistance.
 - Ongoing support for students with special needs who are engaged in volunteer work.
- **University Administration:** The University administration should have:
 - Continuous communication with students to clarify the importance of volunteer work for both the students and society.
 - Specific guidelines for University teachers explaining the role of the volunteer students and how to interact with them.
 - Provision of a suitable schedule for volunteer students that does not conflict with their academic schedule.
 - An email system to receive complaints when any issues arise during the student's volunteering.
 - A plan to establish a dedicated course on volunteer work to be considered mandatory rather than elective for first-year students at Qatar University.

• Partners (Parents – Civil Society Organizations):

They should provide:

- Material and logistical support in collaboration with the University to activate volunteer work within it.
- An understanding of the nature of the University volunteer students and how to interact with them.
- Continuous monitoring of the volunteer students and suggestions for improvement.
- The establishment of a principle of community oversight for the volunteer work.

Research Recommendations

In light of the research findings, the researchers recommend the following:

- Integrate the concept of volunteer work, its objectives, and societal importance for students and the community into some mandatory courses for first-year students at Qatar University.
- Link volunteer work to students' interests, inclinations, and previous experiences to increase the number of volunteers engaged in various activities.
- Enhance coordination between the University and civil society organisations to train students in volunteer work before they begin their activities.
- Organize seminars at the University featuring commendable models of volunteering to motivate students to participate in such initiatives.

Research Proposals

The researchers propose the following future studies:

1. The role of public schools in promoting volunteer work among their students.
2. Evaluating the role of University youth in volunteer work during global events in the State of Qatar.
3. The role of foreign universities in promoting volunteer work within the State of Qatar.

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