

Abstract for review

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From Volunteering to Activism

Volunteering of people with disabilities

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Abstract:

Volunteer work and employment constitutes one of the main predictors of improvement people with disabilities in their quality of life (Balandin, et al. 2006; Nieto et al., 2015; Trembath, Balandin, Togher, & Stanliffe, 2010). Based on the Social Capital approach (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995) the present study focused on volunteers with disabilities who volunteer for the sake of [other] people with disabilities. This question focused on people with disabilities as service providers rather than as recipient of services. We asked what motivate them to volunteer for people with disabilities and what insights do these volunteers bring to the well-being of beneficiaries like them. 35 volunteers with physical, mental and/or cognitive disabilities were interviewed through the narrative interviews about the meaning of volunteering alongside the practical side of the job. Rich and active life stories were revealed; the volunteers were engaged in various corporate positions, including management positions. At times it was difficult to detect the disability with which the participants were coping, because it was not presented by them as the foremost aspect of their identity. The volunteer work they were doing, too, did not give away any form of disability either by type or modes of functioning. In aspects of assistance, an array of practices emerged: use

of life experience (and experiences) which they share as people with disabilities themselves; use of updated rehabilitative knowledge; provision of service to beneficiaries as equals, while maintaining the boundaries that aid in avoiding over-identification, particularly in times of conflict. Out of the assisting practices they presented, it became apparent that the volunteers' identity as people with disabilities is what also contributes to forming their assisting approach. Hence, understanding the uniqueness of their approach to clients is a key factor in developing an organizational culture that promotes integral recruitment of volunteers.

Most important references:

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