

Exploring the development of university students' volunteer activities combined with foreign language learning ---- Taking the example of foreign language volunteer activities in Wuyi area

Siyuan Cai ^a, Ziyang Guan ^b, Zixuan Xie ^c, Peiwen Liang ^d and Haicheng Chen ^e

School of Wuyi University, Jiangmen 529000, China;

^acai1230519@163.com, ^b2822819939@qq.com, ^c2145372607@qq.com,
^d2691142112@qq.com, ^e3444065235@qq.com

Abstract

In recent years, China's volunteering program has been booming. Volunteering activities have a two-way positive effect on the college student population and the society. This paper starts from the foreign language teaching volunteer activities in Wuyi area, integrates the educational background of foreign language learning in the process of practice, analyzes the outstanding problems in practice, and explores the mutual influence between volunteer activities and foreign language learning on this basis, with the hope that it can subsequently produce more positive effects in practice.

Keywords

Volunteering, foreign language learning, volunteerism.

1. Background of the Study

1.1. Background of the Times

Volunteerism is an important symbol of social civilization and progress, and it is an important part of strengthening spiritual civilization and cultivating and practicing socialist core values. In 2013, President Xi Jinping proposed to promote the construction of the "New Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road Economic Belt". "21st Century Maritime Silk Road". Countries and regions along the "Belt and Road" are multilingual and culturally diverse, which requires us to pay more attention to the reserve and cultivation of foreign language talents. In recent years, major sports events such as the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and the 2023 Hangzhou Asian Games have led to an increasing demand for foreign language volunteers. At the same time, in the scenarios where volunteers are needed for major events, conferences, expositions, etc., college students, who are larger in number and have more free time and the ability to act on their own, have become the main force of volunteer service activities compared with other groups. China has rich practical experience in volunteer service activities for volunteer education. In order to balance the distribution of educational resources, China has given relevant policies and financial support to the "College Students' Volunteer Service in the West Program" since 2003. Over the past 20 years, more than 465,000 college student volunteers have been recruited and dispatched to serve at the grassroots level in more than 2,000 counties (cities, districts and counties).

1.2. Regional background

Jiangmen is located in the center of the west bank of the Pearl River Delta, and in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Jiangmen City is the hub and gateway to the west and southwest of Guangdong Province. At the same time, Jiangmen is the capital of overseas Chinese. Due to a variety of economic and historical factors, Jiangmen City has

frequent foreign exchange activities. Therefore, there is a high demand for foreign language volunteers and foreign language talents. There are 8 general colleges and universities in Wuyi area of Jiangmen City, including Wuyi University, Guangzhou Huali College and Jiangmen Vocational and Technical College, with about 75,000 students. According to the students' personal development plan and the teaching requirements of the schools, about 80% of the students will be exposed to foreign languages in their daily study life.

1.3. Analysis of the current situation of related content

At present, China is rich in research and theoretical results related to college students' volunteer service. Since the beginning of this century, China has strongly supported the development of volunteer education programs such as the Three to the Countryside and the Western Program, but most of them aim at supporting the development of the education level of backward areas, balancing the distribution of educational resources, and reducing the injustice of compulsory education. Therefore, all of the above programs are less likely to focus on teaching aided students in foreign languages. For the teaching volunteers, most of the knowledge they teach is not related to their majors or their own studies, so they have less to give back to the sponsored students in terms of their academic performance. According to this situation, we have carried out volunteer activities focusing on foreign language education, in order to explore the mutual influence of foreign language volunteerism on the foreign language learning of college students.

2. Functional Analysis of Foreign Language Education Volunteer Activities

2.1. Helps to Enhance the Interpersonal Skills of College Students

Interpersonal skills are important skills for effective communication and good relationships between people. College age is the last buffer period for the vast majority of people to enter the society. How to learn how to deal with interpersonal relationships is a key lesson for college students before they enter the society. During their school years, college students mainly face students and faculty members, which is essentially the same as the interpersonal environment they used to face. It is difficult to substantially improve one's interpersonal skills if one is only in this environment in college. When participating in the foreign language volunteer service activities, the volunteer teachers have to face the recipient students to teach, and also have to communicate with the parents and the related staff of the activities for the volunteer work. During this period, the volunteers are able to connect with various environments in the society and will face various interpersonal problems. This is conducive to volunteers thinking about how to accurately express their own ideas and how to communicate with others more appropriately and politely in practice. In this kind of environment, volunteers can effectively improve their communication skills.

2.2. It is beneficial for volunteers to use foreign languages in practice to improve their own foreign language proficiency

The lack of context is a fatal problem in Chinese students' foreign language learning, and it is also an important topic to be studied in current foreign language teaching, and language volunteering is one of the solutions to the problem of the lack of context in foreign language teaching. [1] "Utilization" is a practical activity to test language and communication skills. One of the most important aspects of language use is that it provides feedback to the learner. The success of communicating in a language can only be known through its use. Feedback helps the learner to further improve his/her language skills so that the language can be used more accurately and appropriately for communication. In the process of language learning, it is equally possible to learn what is right and what is wrong. When external feedback is untimely or lacking, learners are likely to practice the wrong things. [2] The foreign language volunteer

teaching service activity provides a platform for college students who are interested in learning a foreign language, encouraging them to use and export the foreign language in the process of foreign language teaching, and to show their foreign language level and ability to use the foreign language to others. At the end of the volunteer teaching activities, we conducted a survey on the volunteers who participated in the volunteer teaching activities, in which more than half of the volunteers believed that their foreign language proficiency had been improved in the process of volunteer teaching.

2.3. It is beneficial for college students to explore the fit between the education industry and their own career planning

Currently, many college students are still in a state where their future career planning is still unclear. In recent years, the birth of various new trends in employment has made some college students follow the herd mentality and blindly follow the public to choose employment in the education industry. For this kind of situation, we actually distributed 366 questionnaires, recovered 366 questionnaires, excluding 14 invalid questionnaires, 352 valid questionnaires, questionnaire effective recovery rate of 96.17%. This survey shows that the proportion of college students who said they have the intention to work in the education industry is 61.08% (215 people), which indicates that more than half of the college students' planning for their future is related to the education industry.

Option	Yes	No	Unsure
Proportion (%)	65.22	17.39	17.39

Fig. 1 Do you intend to work in the education sector in the future?

After learning about volunteerism in volunteer education, 77.56% (273) of the college students believed that this type of volunteerism in volunteer education is useful in exploring their future career plans of whether to pursue a career in the education industry. Of the 115 people who had participated in foreign language volunteer teaching, 65.22% (75) of the college students believed that they had explored their relationship with career planning in the education industry.

Option	Can explore	Unsure	Can't explore
Proportion (%)	77.56	13.92	8.52

Fig. 2 Do you think foreign language volunteering can explore your suitability for the education industry?

Option	Yes	No	Unsure
Proportion (%)	65.22	17.39	17.39

Fig. 3 After participating in foreign language volunteer teaching, do you feel that you have explored your fit with the education industry?

The above results show that foreign language volunteering activities help to avoid the trend of blindly following the employment of college students, and expand the channels of college students' understanding of employment in the education industry.

2.4. Facilitating teacher training students to improve their teaching ability

Due to the impact of the epidemic in the past three years, the "double-decrease" policy and other force majeure factors, some teacher training students are facing a lack of practice or

internship opportunities. College students should not limit themselves to learning theoretical knowledge, but should go into the classroom to have in-depth exchanges with their teaching subjects. More students need a "simulated classroom" environment. [3] Volunteer teaching activities organized by colleges and universities can give some teacher-training students the opportunity to act as "teachers", explaining professional knowledge and providing professional help for the students.

On the other hand, teacher trainees can learn to change their mindset through the practice of volunteer teaching. After graduation, many teacher trainees are still in the "student mindset" but have not changed to the "teacher mindset" when they take the podium. A big reason for this is their lack of practical teaching experience, which makes it difficult for them to effectively output knowledge that is suitable for the target audience. Volunteer foreign language teaching can provide college teacher trainees with the opportunity to "go to the podium and enter the classroom", increase their teaching experience in volunteer teaching, change their way of thinking and improve their teaching ability under constant output and teaching. In practice, they can test the correctness of their theories, and practice can lead them to understand and reflect on their own educational work.

3. Outstanding Problems of Foreign Language Teaching

3.1. Insufficient Teaching Ability of Some Non-Teaching Major College Students

Non-teaching majors in most colleges and universities do not offer teaching-related courses. This kind of volunteers have weaker teaching ability compared with the volunteers majoring in teacher training. Therefore, it is a challenge to deviate from the original track on how to teach courses and take the podium. The teaching level and quality of non-teacher-training students in volunteer teaching activities are on the low side and do not meet the general requirements of foreign language volunteer teaching. This discourages volunteers to a certain extent, making it difficult to keep the follow-up of foreign language volunteer teaching activities long-lasting.

3.2. Some volunteers do not understand the essence of foreign language volunteerism.

The spirit of volunteerism is the essence of volunteerism, which is the sublimation of volunteers' behavior and feelings. [4] Volunteers should adhere to the principles of voluntariness, gratuitousness and public welfare when participating in voluntary activities. At present, a small number of college students in the volunteer service of volunteer teaching will hold the attitude of obtaining credits or volunteer hours for the purpose of participating in foreign language volunteer activities, the attitude towards volunteer teaching is more perfunctory, so there is a low efficiency of volunteer work in the process of teaching volunteer teaching, teaching quality is poor. This kind of volunteering with utilitarian mentality tends to make the foreign language volunteer service superficial. At the same time, there are also volunteers who have a herd mentality, only have a vague concept of helping others, and are not clear about the specific content of volunteer teaching, which requires a lot of time to participate in the relevant training at a later stage.

3.3. The students' fundamentals are different, making it difficult to teach them systematically.

Most of the students are attracted by online recruitment and offline publicity, and the parties in charge of the foreign language volunteer service only restrict the age of the students, but do not seriously examine the students' foreign language foundation. In the course of teaching, students with different knowledge bases often report that they cannot understand a certain point or that they have already understood it.

3.4. Lack of structured system and professional training for volunteer foreign language teachers

Volunteer foreign language teaching is organized by universities in cooperation with third-party communities and led by student organizations, in which most of the processes of interviewing, training, and teaching volunteers are supervised and evaluated by the student organizations. Volunteer services organized by groups of college students have many deficiencies in the construction of a structured system. Most of the college students have not systematically learned the knowledge in this area, which makes it difficult for student organizations to build a complete and reasonable structured system.

At the same time, the teaching experience and personal education level of volunteer teachers are more limited, and they have not been trained professionally. Each volunteer teacher has different teaching methods, styles and contents, and the knowledge received by the aided students varies and is duplicated depending on the volunteers they face, which causes certain problems to the aided students.

3.5. Other Problems

At the same time, we have also made corresponding statistics on other problems of volunteer teaching, mainly focusing on "poor order of students, difficult to deter students", "lack of professional and systematic teaching materials, cumbersome preparation process" and so on, which still need to be further improved. These problems need to be further improved.

4. Realization Path of Foreign Language Volunteer Service Practice for College Students

4.1. Broadening the Volunteer Platform for Foreign Language Education

Give full play to the role of colleges and universities as the main platform for education. Colleges and universities can cooperate with different junior and senior high schools to carry out foreign language volunteer service activities. The foreign language learning ability of students from the same junior and senior high school will be more uniform than that of students recruited online or through community cooperation. Volunteers trained by the university authorities will teach the recipient students, which will help to improve the foreign language output ability of the university volunteers in the process, and at the same time, the recipient students will also be able to get in touch with foreign language education outside of the compulsory education curriculum and communicate with the university students, thus achieving a win-win effect.

4.2. Cultivate volunteers' spirit of volunteer service

Colleges and universities should guide college students to fully understand and practice the spirit of volunteerism. Only when college students fully understand the intrinsic value of the spirit of volunteerism and agree with it, will they consciously internalize it in their hearts. Guiding college students to deeply understand the culture of volunteerism, strengthening their understanding of the spirit of volunteerism, and encouraging college students to devote themselves to social service public welfare undertakings. [5] When college students truly recognize the spirit of volunteerism, they can treat volunteer activities of volunteer education without perfunctory and subservient, and can do a good job in this work of volunteer education. When volunteers seriously practice the spirit of volunteerism, it is conducive to the smoother development of volunteer activities, and they can also experience a sense of satisfaction and gain in the activities.

4.3. Formulate reasonable recruitment and training programs

Strengthen the promotion of the volunteer spirit of "dedication, fraternity, mutual help and progress", clarify the target and demand for volunteer education, and select qualified and dedicated volunteers. In this process, we must ensure that the procedures are standardized and fair, and that the volunteers achieve their personal goals and give full play to their potential in the process. Rigorous and formalized training with clear orientation prepares volunteers to take on special responsibilities and helps them to better accomplish their service tasks. [6]

Foreign language volunteers play an important role in volunteer activities, and the goal of the training program is to help volunteers improve their skills and professional knowledge, and enhance the efficiency and quality of service. Theory and service skills training is implemented to help volunteers understand the meaning and significance of volunteering, as well as to improve volunteer workers' communication skills, problem-solving skills, teamwork skills and other abilities. Implementing professional skills training, according to the foreign languages and abilities mastered by volunteers, conducting listening training and oral practice exercises in conjunction with the contents of the foreign language volunteering services that need to be carried out, and playing audio in foreign languages, such as news, movie clips or music, in order to improve the listening comprehension of volunteer workers; and encouraging volunteers to carry out oral practice with each other in order to cultivate their ability to express themselves orally.

4.4. Standardize feedback procedures and establish a long-term volunteer service mechanism

After carrying out the volunteer service activities in an orderly manner, the volunteer activity organizer should collect the feedback related to volunteer teaching and communicate with the volunteers and the recipient students in a timely manner. After receiving the feedback, the volunteers should adjust the teaching content and summarize the content of the class and the problems of the students. At the same time, the organizer should hand over the above contents with the next volunteer in time, so as to form a complete teaching system. College teachers should provide reasonable guidance on academic and system design during the whole feedback process, which will eventually form a long-term and effective volunteer service mechanism and promote the sustainable development of volunteer teaching activities.

5. Conclusion

With the continuous booming development of China's volunteering in recent years, the importance of foreign language in volunteering activities has become more and more prominent. As a part of the society, college students have rich foreign language knowledge and skills and play an important role in foreign language volunteer activities. College students provide fresh blood for volunteer teaching and facilitate more volunteer teaching activities. At the same time, volunteering for teaching provides college students with a variety of ways to practice and brings more practical opportunities, which is an effective way to combine college students' volunteering activities with foreign language learning. If the combination of volunteering activities and foreign language learning can be fully realized, it will generate more positive feedback for both volunteers and recipients in volunteer practice.

Acknowledgements

Natural Science Foundation.

References

- [1] Z.Y. He: Trial Analysis of the Role of Language Volunteering on the Improvement of Foreign Language Majors' Competence--Taking the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games as an Example,School Party Building and Ideological Education,Vol.32 (2014)No. 14,p.36-38.
- [2] C.M. Wang: Foreign Language Learning Patterns of Chinese Students, Foreign Language Teaching and Research,Vol.33 (1989)No. 04,p.47-52.
- [3] C.L. Pei , X.J. Pan: Exploring the Current Situation and Practice Path of College Students' Volunteer Service under the Double-Reduction Policy, Science Consulting(Educational Research),Vol. 24 (2023) No.07, p.11-14.
- [4] Q.Mu: How to Understand Volunteerism and Volunteer Spirit, Journal of Beijing Youth Politics Institute,Vol.5 (2005)No.03, p.9-12.
- [5] Z.H.Ling: Study on the Lack of Volunteerism and its Cultivation among College Students in the New Era--Taking Guangdong B School as an Example, 2023 Eighth Academic Forum on Life Education(Beijing,China,August 12,2023).2023.p.3.
- [6] S.F. Teng: Implications of the Successful Experiences of Western Overseas Volunteerism for China, China Youth Research, Vol.23 (2011)No. 05,p.113-116.