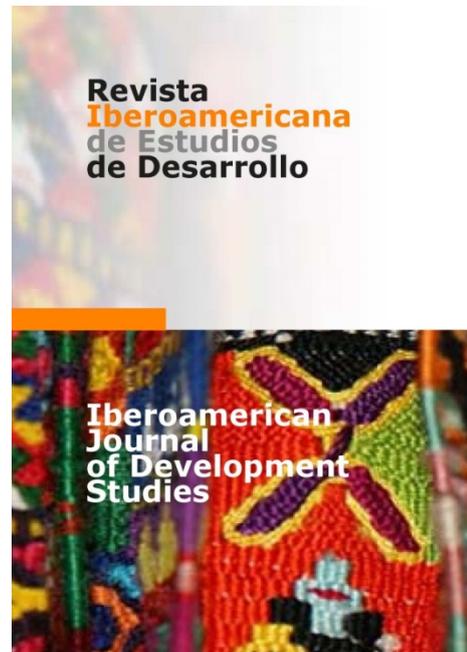**Accepted Manuscript**

The impact of international volunteers on education quality in developing countries – An assessment of organisations' volunteer recruitment and management practices

Estefanie Hechenberger

Recipient of the IV REEDES Award for Young Researchers

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The impact of international volunteers on education quality in developing countries – An assessment of organisations' volunteer recruitment and management practices

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El impacto del voluntario internacional en la calidad de la educación en países en desarrollo: una evaluación de las prácticas de reclutamiento y gestión de voluntarios

Ganador del IV Premio REEDES para Jóvenes Investigadoras/es

Estefanie HECHENBERGER
estefanie.hechenberger@gmail.com
London School of Economics and Political Science
(United Kingdom)

Abstract

International volunteering and service (IVS) organisations expanded dramatically in size, reach and variety in the past decades. While volunteering is socially valued, we know little about the real impact it has on host communities. I take a segregated approach to assess the potential impact of IVS on education, the most popular activity. Using Sherraden *et al.*'s (2008) conceptual model of IVS impacts, I explore the effects that individual and institutional factors have on education outcomes. In addition to the literature review on IVS and education quality, qualitative data on 12 sending organisations' volunteer recruitment and management practices was gathered. Findings suggest that teaching qualifications and expertise are among the most significant factors but are often not prioritized in the recruitment criteria. Yet, existing limitations can be compensated through effective programming. Some patterns can be identified when comparing the common practices of the four types of organisations reviewed.

Keywords: international volunteering and service, volunteer recruitment and management, education quality, hidden exclusion, North-to-South volunteering.

Resumen

Recientemente, las organizaciones de voluntariado y servicio internacional (IVS) se han expandido drásticamente en tamaño, alcance y variedad. A pesar de que el voluntariado goza de un alto reconocimiento social, sabemos poco acerca del impacto real que este tiene en las comunidades anfitrionas. Mediante el modelo conceptual de impactos del IVS de Sherraden *et al.* (2008), evalúo el impacto potencial del IVS, explorando los efectos de los factores individuales e institucionales sobre la calidad del servicio educativo que ofrece el voluntario. Además de analizar la bibliografía sobre IVS y la calidad educativa, se reunieron datos cualitativos sobre las prácticas de reclutamiento y gestión de voluntarios de 12 organizaciones emisoras. Mientras que el análisis demuestra la importancia de la cualificación y experiencia de los voluntarios, se observa a menudo su negligencia en las prácticas de reclutamiento. Sin embargo, diversas limitaciones pueden ser compensadas. Asimismo, se encontraron patrones entre los cuatro tipos de organizaciones.

Palabras clave: voluntariado internacional, reclutamiento y gestión de voluntarios, calidad de la educación, exclusión oculta, voluntariado Norte-Sur.

Introduction

More than 10 million volunteers travel and volunteer abroad every year (McGehee 2014). What scholars call «Voluntourism» is one of the fastest growing market sectors of the tourism industry (Tourism Research and Marketing Group 2008). Its popularity has soared in the past decades, especially among citizens from wealthy nations, offering an organized and easy way of «Doing Development» (Simpson 2004) and «Making a Difference» (Butcher & Smith 2010) in developing countries. Volunteers devote their time to serve in less advantaged communities and a lot of them even pay to do it. They engage in a broad range of service fields such as childcare, education, health, business development, environmental conservation, construction and many more. Initially, managed by government agencies like the Peace Corps, the purpose of international volunteering and service (IVS) was focused on objectives of peace and international development through technical assistance. However, with its debut in the private sector, motivations and objectives, as well as the types of voluntary activities, have evolved, becoming more diverse and blurred.

Meanwhile, nearly 68 million teachers are needed to achieve universal quality education in primary and secondary levels by 2030 (UNESCO 2016). The role of alternative education providers like NGOs has increased (Rose 2009), including IVS organisations, which contribute to «filling gaps» by sending thousands of volunteers every year to teach in disadvantaged communities. In fact, 85 % of volunteers engage in education (McBride *et al.* 2003), which makes their presence difficult to ignore. This is an example, proponents may say, of how international volunteerism fulfils its mission of «extending services to the excluded» (VSO 2016). However, we know virtually nothing about the real developmental impact these volunteers have had on host communities. Impact studies on IVS are worryingly scarce. It seems like the high social value of volunteering exempts IVS from scrutiny, though only in the developing world. Volunteer-based education programmes for disadvantaged communities in the US, such as «Teach for America», are constantly put into question by scholars and the media and have become subject of numerous studies to determine their effectiveness. But if Americans worry about the presence of recent graduate volunteers in their education sector, why do we ask no questions when low-skilled volunteers intervene in the education sectors of the developing world?

Sadly, global education is highly unequal. Not only in terms of access but also in terms of quality. Save the Children (2013) speaks of a «hidden exclusion», when children attend school every day, but they do not learn. They have access to education, but are excluded from quality education. Chudgar *et al.* (2014, p. 150) explain this by pointing to the «parallel cadre of undertrained, underpaid, often younger inexperienced teachers» prevalent in most disadvantaged countries. The description of that parallel cadre is disturbingly similar to common critiques about young, unskilled international volunteers, a group expanding thanks to the growing gap year industry and popularization of short-term unspecialized programmes (Simpson 2004). Besides the lack of skills, scholars worry about the misalignment of expectations, the overemphasis of volunteer enthusiasm, the perpetuation of stereotypes, dependency and the neglect of host communities' needs, among others (Hutnyk 1996, Simpson 2005, McGehee & Andereck 2008, Guttentag 2009, Palacios 2010, Loiseau *et al.* 2016). On the other hand, IVS can bring many benefits as well. It can increase international understanding of both the volunteer and the host community, increase civic engagement, offer material support to the disadvantaged, minimize the strain of the tourism industry, and allow volunteers gain useful skills (Brown 2005, Loiseau *et al.* 2016, Powell & Bratović 2007, Brook *et al.* 2007, Lough *et al.* 2009). Considering that mosaic of risks and benefits, what is then the impact of IVS on the education sector of developing countries? Could it be that, in the eagerness of «extending services to the excluded», we are silently contributing to the «hidden exclusion»? These questions and concerns motivated the present study.

Though gaining attention, international volunteerism continues to be an underresearched area. Most studies focus on the volunteer, looking at the demographics of participants, their motivations, networks and the benefits they gain from volunteering (Wearing 2001, Brown 2005, Sin 2009, Lough 2013). Some research has been devoted to volunteer-sending organisations' objectives and discourses (Simpson 2004, Ong *et al.* 2011, McGloin & Georgeou 2016). And, comparatively, little has been written on the perceptions of and impact on the host community (McGehee & Andereck 2008, Guttentag 2009, Loiseau *et al.* 2016). However, before we can really assess its impact on development objectives, we need to grasp the factors and processes that influence IVS outcomes. IVS scholars have called for expanding the empirical base on the subject and diving into the nuances and complexity of the types of IVS and their outcomes (Lough *et al.* 2018). With this article, it is intended to contribute to the theorization and assessment of IVS by presenting and applying a model of segregated analysis.

In general terms, with this model, it is aimed to improve the understanding of impact processes in IVS. I demonstrate its potential by applying it on the education sector, emphasizing the particularities of this field of service. First, I do a review of the literature on IVS and education quality. Then, I illustrate common practices by IVS sending organisations based on the qualitative data gathered. The study identifies the most significant factors of IVS in education, how they influence outcomes and tests the role of sending organisations in shaping the capacity of the volunteer and the IVS setting. This analysis will in turn provide a guide for organisations during their programming, which hopefully will contribute to the betterment of the IVS sector.

2

Literature review

2.1. The evolution of volunteering

Enlightenment missions, religious brigades and overseas help for disaster recovery can be considered early forms of international volunteering (Lough 2015). Formal ways of volunteering, however, are traced back to the British Red Cross in the beginning of the 20th century. But it wasn't until the 1950s that specialized international volunteering organisations, such as the Australian Volunteers International (AVI) and the Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), were created reflecting the international cooperation values growing under the United Nations. These government organisations aimed to provide the technical assistance required by newly independent countries. The Peace Corps, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), the Canadian University Service Organisation (CUSO) and other government agencies joined in the second half of the 20th century to place skilled volunteers around the developing world as part of their official development assistance programmes. The development objective of these organisations is still reflected in United Nations Volunteers (UNV)'s definition of international volunteerism as an «organized engagement in development by volunteers working abroad» (UNV 2011).

With the exponential growth of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the 80s and 90s, the civil society grew to be a major player in development. NGOs soon became the number one providers of international volunteer projects (Lyons & Wearing 2008), administering 92 % of international volunteering programmes (McBride *et al.* 2003, p. 39). In order to bring more

volunteers on board, short-term placements were offered and skills requirements loosened up, making IVS more attractive (Simpson 2005). Moreover, the international volunteerism boom coincided with the rejection of mass-tourism (Kumaran & Pappas 2012) and the emergence of new «responsible» or «ethical» types of tourism (Butcher 2013). Being able to volunteer in remote places, without having to commit to long-time placements, gained traction among the western population. Volunteer holidays became the perfect way of travelling while «giving back to society» and this niche market has since been exploited by private enterprises. Since the terms «volunteer tourism» or «voluntourism» was coined in the late 90s, research about the subject has grown exponentially (Elliot 2008).

Definitions vary between voluntourism and development more oriented volunteering. However, Sherraden *et al.* (2008, p. 397) offer an overarching, more inclusive definition of international volunteering and service (IVS): «IVS is an organized period of engagement and contribution to society by volunteers who work across an international border, in another country or countries. IVS may be sponsored by public or private organisations, it is recognized and valued by society, and volunteers receive little or no monetary compensation».

2.2. Dimensions of IVS

Definitions of international volunteering vary, because researchers often have different types of IVS programmes in mind. IVS is certainly not a homogeneous activity and is becoming ever more diverse. Geudens *et al.* (2013, p. 11) identify five dimensions in which voluntary service varies: geographical dimension, age, duration, type of volunteer, and type of placement (see figure 1).

Some studies have used these dimensions to conceptualize the level of impact of IVS programmes. Callanan and Thomas (2005), for example, suggest classifying IVS into «shallow», «intermediate» or «deep», based on volunteer motivations, programme duration and skill requirements, among other factors. However, the influence of these dimensions on IVS «success» is not as straight forward, and they can vary depending on the organisations' objectives (Strong 2016), and other local factors.
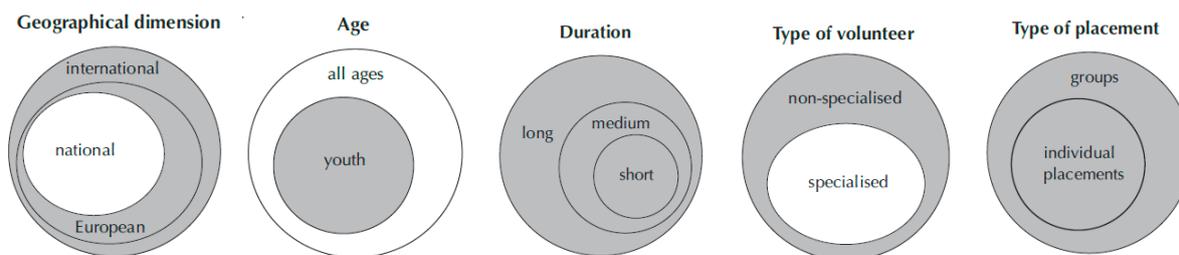
Figure 1

Dimensions of voluntary service

Source: Geudens *et al.* (2013, p. 11).

For example, while short-term IVS is usually considered as less impactful, ineffective or just resource consuming (Guttentag 2009), others argue that high-skilled volunteers can be very impactful in short-term placements (Lough *et al.* 2011, Lough *et al.* 2018). In another case, individual placements may render more effective in projects where the main objective is to promote intercultural understanding, since volunteering in a group —although providing more «extra hands»— hinders a full immersion in the host culture (Sherraden *et al.* 2006). While there are general claims about the positive and negative impacts of IVS, we still «lack understanding about how and why particular forms of IVS and different contexts lead to different outcomes» (Sherraden *et al.* 2008, p. 412).

Although not considered by Geudens *et al.* (2013), IVS varies most in terms of service field. IVS organisations offer a range of projects in areas such as health, education, orphanage care, environmental conservation, construction, farming, community development, animal care, business consulting, etc. The most common field of service is education. According to McBride *et al.* (2003, p. 17), 85 % of IVS programmes worked in educational activities followed by human and social services (80 %), community development (75 %), and environmental protection (73 %). From the millions of US citizens who volunteered internationally between 2004 and 2012, 27 % worked in tutoring or teaching followed by engaging in general labour (26 %) and mentoring the youth (26 %) (Lough 2013, p. 4). Of Peace Corps volunteers, 42 % work in education, followed by health (20 %), and youth in development (12 %) (Peace Corps 2018). As we see, fields of activity overlap, and rates depend on definitions (see figures 2 and 3).

	Yes	Percentage
Tutor or teach	409,862	26.9
Engage in general labor	402,143	26.4
Mentor youth	388,754	25.5
Provide counseling, medical care, or protective services	323,399	21.2
Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food	267,940	17.6
Collect, make, or distribute clothing, crafts, or goods	248,073	16.3
Fundraise or sell items to raise money	227,359	14.9
Provide professional or management assistance	151,506	9.9
Engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities	141,630	9.3
Provide general office services	128,433	8.4
Provide information or be an usher, greeter, or minister	114,894	7.5
Any other type of activity	249,264	16.3

*Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Figure 2

Type of activities completed by US volunteers from 2007 to 2012

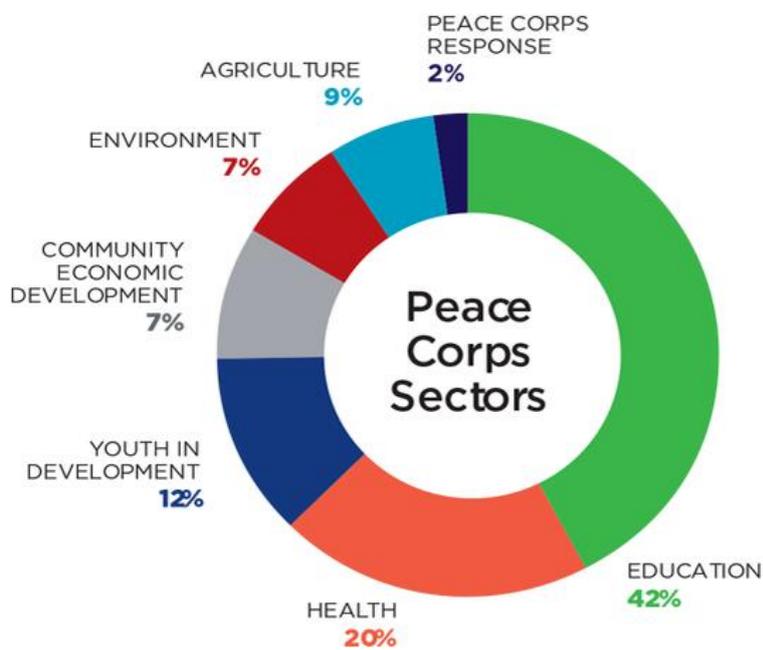*Source:* Lough (2013, p. 5).

Figure 3

Peace Corps sectors where volunteers served in 2018

Source: Peace Corps (2018).

Itself education is one of the most varied fields of work. Activities can include teaching art in pre-school or science in high school, running conversational English courses or sports activities, help designing education plans, give workshops on nutrition, feminine hygiene or HIV, support in-job skill transfer, and so much more. Actually, many activities within other fields of service can be categorized as educational, and numbers will vary according to the definition, but a study of two major IVS providers found that «tutoring or teaching», «helping community read, speak or write English» and «providing universal primary education» were among the most common activities reported by alumni (Lough 2009). Thus, the analysis of education IVS here focuses on traditional school teaching.

2.3. The importance of segregated research

Among the biggest shortfalls of IVS literature, is the lack of research on impacts, especially on communities being «served». Proponents praise the increased civic engagement of volunteers, as well as the volunteers' professional and personal development, the deepening of international understanding of international understanding and the promotion of global peace (Brown 2005, Brook *et al.* 2007, Powel & Bratović 2007). Critics are generally sceptical of the real developmental impact of IVS and warn from a new form of imperialism, the reinforcement of stereotypes, the promotion of dependency and the normalization of poverty, among others (Simpson 2004, McGehee & Andereck 2008, Raymond & Hall 2008, Guttentag 2009, Mostafanezhad 2014). Apart from the little use of rigorous social science methods and developmental indicators that hinders reliable impact evidence, IVS is too often treated as one homogeneous unit and is rarely recognized in its diversity. Sherraden *et al.* (2008) were the first to take a segregated approach, attempting to conceptualize the key categories and relationships that shape different forms of IVS and their outcomes. They developed a conceptual model for impact evidence, based on an ample review of IVS literature, suggesting that IVS outcomes on host communities, volunteers and sending communities depend on volunteer attributes and individual capacity, as well as programme attributes and institutional capacity that shape in turn IVS action (see figure 4).
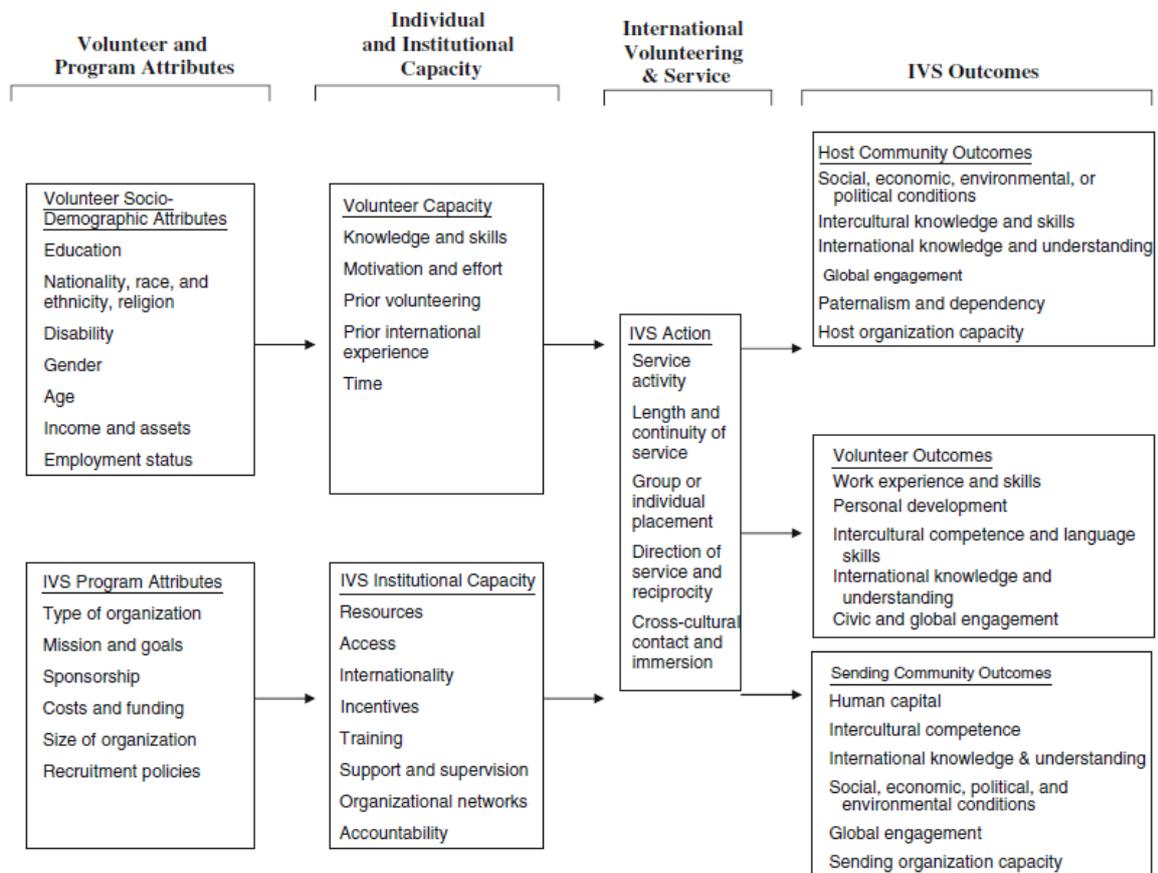
Figure 4

Conceptual model: international volunteering and service impacts

Source: Sherraden *et al.* (2008, p. 397).

With this model, Sherraden *et al.* (2008) made a huge contribution to the understanding of how different forms of IVS action lead to different outcomes, which allows impact researchers to segregate their analysis and hold more nuanced discussions. The model points to potential areas of research and can serve as a guide for IVS organisations during the programme design and planning process. Nonetheless, I identified three shortcomings.

2.3.1. IVS research by field of service

Sherraden *et al.* (2008) identify a broad range of IVS fields and activities under IVS action. Despite recognizing that the various activities may have different benefits and

drawbacks, the category *service activity* acts as a mere factor in the model. I argue that the *field of service* should act as a lens under which to observe the whole IVS impact model, precisely because the potential, risks and importance of each category as well as the nature of their relationships, vary between fields. Let me illustrate this with some examples: health or medical programmes will, for ethical reasons, require specialized skills, as opposed to most construction programmes where volunteers could quickly learn how to do basic chores. On the other hand, the likelihood of construction volunteers stealing job opportunities in a low-skill-based community is very high, while the health sector of many developing countries does suffer from a shortage of medical professionals and would most likely benefit from external assistance and skill-transfer. Each type of activity comes with different implications, thus it should be studied separately. Some specialized studies have emerged recently, mostly focusing on the global health sector (McCall & Iltis 2014, Lasker 2016, Lough *et al.* 2018), environmental protection (Measham & Barnett 2008, Lorimer 2009), and orphanage care (Punaks & Feit 2014, Guiney 2015). Studies focusing on health are mostly concerned with the lack of skills of participants (Wallace 2012), language barriers, dependency creation and ethical issues common in North-to-South medical voluntourism (McCall & Iltis 2014). Environment focused studies usually regard the «extra helping hands» of volunteers as helpful and investigate volunteers' motivations in order to increase the attractiveness of programmes (Measham & Barnett 2008). Studies on orphanage voluntourism have unfortunately uncovered the most disastrous outcomes, exposing cases of child displacement, exploitation, and unusual growth of orphanages in Nepal, Cambodia and Uganda leading to a call for regulations, protection policies and even the prohibition of this form of IVS (Punaks & Feit 2014, Guiney 2015, rethinkorphanages.org). Though some contributions to the literature on education IVS are noticeable (Guttentag 2009, Farndale 2009, Zhou & Shang 2011), it has not kept up with the stark increase of programmes offered in this field.

2.3.2. The role of sending organisations

Sherraden *et al.* (2008) do a great job recognizing and illustrating that the factors that shape IVS are individual *and* institutional. Nonetheless, they fail to depict in the model (maybe with another arrow) that the programme attributes and institutional capacity shape not only IVS action, but also the attributes and capacity of the volunteer corps. By assessing the volunteer

recruitment and management practices of sending organisations, we can paint a picture of what kind of volunteers are being recruited and how well prepared they are for their IVS project.

There are four key stakeholders in IVS: the volunteer, the sending organisation, the host organisation and the host community (Ong *et al.* 2011). The organisational architecture varies across IVS programmes (Sherraden *et al.* 2006); for example, while operating from their headquarters (usually in the Global North), sending organisations sometimes also run the projects and cater the volunteers on the ground. Mostly though, sending organisations establish a partnership with a local host organisation, which welcomes, accommodates and manages the volunteer. IVS programme attributes and institutional capacity in the model refer to the whole institutional body of sending and host organisations. However, power relations and the extent to which each participates in decision making, planning and management of the volunteer varies extremely across IVS programmes (Sherraden *et al.* 2008).

Sending organisations can be government agencies, NGOs, universities, religious organisations, private companies or charities (Guttentag 2009). Sending organisations' responsibilities include building a relationship of trust with the host organisation or directly with the community; designing programmes aligned to the host communities' needs; publicizing the projects; recruiting and selecting volunteers; providing logistical support, information, orientation, sometimes training, and supporting in post-trip acclimatisation (Ong *et al.* 2011). That means they play a crucial role in directing the orchestra of IVS. The responsibilities they take on vary however: some stick to the recruitment and logistical support, and others get involved in specific programmatic work. Voluntourism experts Wearing and McGehee (2013, p. 124) consider sending organisations a «key factor in maximizing good practice». The body of knowledge in this area is still small but growing. Some have engaged with organisations' guiding considerations (Ong *et al.* 2011), their image (Coghlan 2007), and best practices to maximize benefits and minimize negative impacts (Ellis 2003, McGehee & Andereck 2008, Palacios 2010). However, these have mostly focused on short-term voluntourism, providing a tourism-oriented perspective, and few have offered a view on developmental outcomes. So far, no comprehensive study has been conducted comparing practice differences between the diverse types of sending organisations. This research aims to address this gap by comparing four types of organisations: Government agencies, non-profit NGOs, social enterprises and for-profit companies.

2.3.3. Local dynamics

The third and final shortcoming of the model is the neglect of local dynamics. In the model, it is recognized a range of potential outcomes for the host community, but it does not consider how local dynamics and attitudes can influence IVS impacts. There are a number of factors that can exponentiate or nullify the impact of even the best IVS programmes; for example, if volunteers are not welcome by local teachers, they may have a hard time collaborating even if they are very well trained. Social norms, religion, previous exposure to foreigners, etc., may shape those attitudes. Sending organisations will have to try to be as aware as possible of local dynamics and factor in those considerations in the design of their programmes. It may not be Sherraden *et al.'s* fault local dynamics are not included in the model, but rather the virtual absence of them in IVS literature. This is a very important gap in IVS research that needs attention. Unfortunately, it is out of this research's capacities.

Now that we have reviewed the IVS literature and the IVS impact model we may proceed to its application in the education field, while assessing common practices of sending organisations.

3
Methodology

This research examines the impact of education IVS on a theoretical and an empirical level, thus taking a two-step approach:

1. *Review Sherraden et al's (2008) IVS impacts model in the context of education:* I place the theoretical base by applying the model on education IVS. This entails bridging the education literature and discussing factor by factor their relevance, interrelationship and influence on educational outcomes.
2. *Assess common practices of sending organisations:* once we understood how the various forms of IVS and specific factors influence educational outcomes, we want to know the current status of these. What practices and considerations are common among sending organisations that offer education IVS programmes?

3.1. Theorizing education IVS

This step gives an example on how to apply Sherraden *et al.*'s (2008) model of IVS impacts (figure 4) to a specific field of service, in this case traditional education IVS. Like the authors, we discuss in detail the volunteer and programme attributes, the individual and institutional capacity and IVS action, bridging each factor with existing English literature on education quality, in order to determine their relevance and how they relate to each other.

3.2. Empirical evidence of education IVS

The objective of the empirical research is to draw a picture of the current state of education IVS, that is, the common practices that shape their programmes and impact their outcomes. We want to identify differences between types of organisations, red flags, best practices and the standards that govern sending organisations.

To build an evidence base, qualitative data was gathered from 12 sending organisations' web pages and 4 semi-structured interviews with volunteer recruitment staff. The categories guiding the data extraction process are mainly a reflection of Sherraden *et al.*'s (2008) conceptual model of IVS impacts and Kumaran and Pappas' (2012) study on «Managing Voluntourism» and include information clustered in five broad categories: type of projects, requirements, the selection process, volunteer management, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The data[1] includes further notes on ownership, discourse and objectives. Most categories were filled based on the internet-based research; however, the interviews were intended to gain deeper insight into the workings of IVS organisations and a sense of their key considerations during the programming, recruitment and volunteer management.

The 12 organisations reviewed where identified based on their type, size, popularity and offer of education programmes. They include three government agencies (Peace Corps [PC], Voluntary Services Overseas [VSO],[2] and Australian Volunteers International [AVI]), three non-profit NGOs (WorldTeach [WT], Global Volunteers [GV], and Teachers2Teachers Global [T2TGlobal]), three social enterprises (Global Vision International [GVI], Kaya Responsible Travel [KRT], and 2WayDevelopment [2WD]), and three for-profit companies (Projects Abroad [PA], International Volunteer HQ [IVHQ], and Plan My Gap Year [PMGY]).

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[1]   For access to the full qualitative data table, please do not hesitate to e-mail the author.

[2]   VSO is not a government agency but runs the UK government's International Citizen Service programme.

Interviews were conducted with representatives from an organisation of almost each group, namely AVI, T2TGlobal, GVI and 2WD.

3.3. Limitations

Unfortunately, access to interview partners in the for-profit sector was a serious limitation since all organisations contacted replied indicating they had a «non-participation-with-research policy». This lamentably suggests a lack of transparency from the part of for-profit organisations. On the other hand, the sample is still very small, which limits its representativeness. Generalizations, especially about the four organisation categories, should be drawn with caution. This study does not claim to be quantitatively representative, but offers valuable qualitative insights. Replicates, expansions and even quantitative versions of this study are encouraged. Also, since the empirical data is based on web pages and interviews conducted with staff from the sending organisations, which aim to appeal to the public and present the organisation in the best light possible, we need to be wary of biases in the data. Although the research asks mostly for punctual information rather than narratives, a level of subjectivity in interpreting organisations' processes and objectives is inevitable. Nonetheless, the data table (access by request) includes discernible information for the reader to assess.

4

Analysis and findings

In this section, it is discussed, step by step, the key categories and relationships laid out in Sherraden *et al.*'s (2008) conceptual model with a special focus on their relationship with education quality and presents the most salient empirical findings assessing the common practices of sending organisations. By doing this, I address the two shortcomings identified: look at the model with an «education lens» and assess how sending organisations are currently shaping IVS.

4.1. Volunteer attributes and individual capacity

Sherraden *et al.* (2008, p. 297) define volunteer attributes as «the socio-demographic characteristics of the volunteer corps» and individual capacity as «the knowledge, skills, and

motivation that individuals bring to the volunteer experience that affect their effectiveness and ability to meet placement goals and objectives». Volunteers are the front line agents to the beneficiaries of IVS. That means their characteristics directly affect the quality and effectiveness of the service provided. These characteristics also shape who is able or more likely to volunteer in the first place. As argued earlier however, the volunteer attributes and capacity are also shaped by the recruitment and management practices of IVS organisations.

4.1.1. Volunteer sociodemographic attributes

Volunteer attributes influence in many ways the quality of the educational service provided. The volunteers' *level of education* seems an obvious one. Studies show that teachers with advanced degrees, stronger literacy and verbal abilities, and relevant certifications tend to bring better educational outcomes (Rice 2003). From the sample, no for-profit organisation required any level of education, while all government agencies, two NGOs and one social enterprise required a degree. However, the variation among NGOs and social enterprises suggest that the requirements were more dependent on the specific service activity and the objectives of the programme; for example, T2TGlobal requires a bachelor's degree in education for teacher trips and a PhD for specific teacher training projects, while those organisations involved in primary education tend to find a higher degree unnecessary. Rice (2003), for instance, found that the relationship between teacher preparation and educational outcomes depend on the level of instruction and the subject. Furthermore, teaching experience has proven to be an even higher predictor of teaching skills and knowledge than the level of degree acquired (Rice 2003, Darling-Hammond *et al.* 2005).

Attributes are also interrelated. The level of education and experience, for example, is very strongly related to the minimum *age* required. Organisations targeted to the youth naturally they have low to no education requirements, while those operating with career professionals recruit more mature adults. The direct effects of teacher age on learning outcomes are not as straightforward (Armstrong 2015). However, age was found to have an indirect effect on volunteer capacity, level of commitment (Callan & Thomas 2005), and on relational quality (in terms of authority and trust) with the student. It is young people aged 15 to 24 that volunteer most frequently (Lough 2013) and about 82 % of them work in education (McBride *et al.* 2003).

Nationality, race, ethnicity and religion is a crucial factor to consider in education IVS. Cultural misunderstanding is one of the most cited difficulties that foreign teachers face in a

classroom (Deutchman 1966, Zhou & Shang 2011). In addition to the language barrier, people often forget how culturally engrained school materials are and how differences in cultural values and customs can cause conflict such as problems of misconduct and scepticism from fellow teachers (Farndale 2009). If cultural barriers represent a difficulty to experienced teachers, imagine for the novice volunteers. On the other hand, these differences can bring cultural enrichment, for both the volunteer and the host, only if well managed (Raymond & Hall 2008). Although this study lacks data on the volunteers' nationalities and cultural backgrounds, we know that most come from affluent western countries mainly from the US, Canada, UK, Germany and Australia (McBride *et al.* 2003). Given that the teacher role is inherently a symbol of authority, there is a danger that western volunteer teachers reinforce the cultural stereotypes of western superiority. This is especially true when volunteers are given full freedom in their teaching, because they are often perceived as better and more knowledgeable (Loiseau *et al.* 2016). Sending organisations and volunteers also need to be aware of the local community's ethnical or religious perceptions, which could result in conflict or rejection.

Given that most organisations from the sample are from affluent countries or require a significant participation fee, we can assume the relative affluence of volunteers. While there are too few studies on the effect of socioeconomic status on teaching quality, the volunteers' level of *income and assets* often translates in financial contributions to the schools and donations of educational material such as books, visual aids, notebooks, (colour) pencils, etc. In general, 65 % of volunteers provide money or resources during their service (Lough *et al.* 2009). This certainly contributes to the school's teaching quality, but only works as a band aid solution until the influx of volunteers and donations stop.

Studies have found that female teachers significantly increase girls' attendance and performance in school (Muralidharan & Sheth 2014). However, it begs the question whether female international volunteers have the same effect as local female teachers and thus, whether one can hope that the high participation of women in IVS (more than 60 % according to UN Volunteers, Lough 2015) is contributing to overcome one of the biggest challenges of the education sector in developing countries: education equity. No organisation seemed to place special importance on the gender, income or cultural background of the volunteers.

4.1.2. Volunteer capacity

The *knowledge and skills* of the volunteer, very closely related to their education and experience, may be important or not depending on the activities and objectives of the IVS programme (Sherraden *et al.* 2008, p. 398). Similarly, the impact of teacher knowledge varies among level of instruction and subjects (Rice 2003). A volunteer teaching art to pre-school children needs different skills than one teaching math or science in high school, not to mention the skills needed to provide teacher training. Still, enough evidence shows that teacher quality, constituted by certification, experience and motivation, is the determinant number one of educational outcomes (Darling-Hammond 2000, Zhang 2008). The lack of adequate volunteer teacher preparation can represent a waste of resources, or at worst, it can jeopardize students' learning. In the data, skills requirements vary from a PhD plus three years of teaching experience (T2TGlobal) to no experience at all (all others except government agencies). Some organisations claim that requirements are project specific and that they tailor the programmes to volunteers' skills. However, while there is no consistent reporting on volunteers' actual responsibilities, many personal recounts (academic and on the media) reveal that most volunteers, with experience or not, are allowed to teach a class independently, mostly replacing a local teacher (Farndale 2009, Pycroft 2016). Reported practices to compensate the lack of skills include placing inexperienced volunteers only as teacher assistants, provide guidance on what to teach (WT, GV, GVI, and PA) and offer an online TEFL for a fee (IVHQ, and PMGY). Still worryingly, statements in project descriptions such as «what you teach when you volunteer in Bali is completely up to you» and «you don't need any experience, just 100 % commitment» (PMGY)[3] show no sign of concern for teaching experience and quality, yet they are prevalent across IVS organisations.

Such statements reflect an overemphasis on *motivation and effort.* Motivation is in fact very valuable, as it influences teacher behaviour and by extension learning outcomes (Ofoegbu 2004). Still, motivation alone does not compensate for lack of skills. Fortunately, there are ways to channel motivation more effectively. As teacher assistants for example, the volunteer can focus on giving local teachers refreshing ideas, new energy, or simply the extra help they needed. Also, motivated volunteers are likely to commit to significant training prior to their deployment, which can significantly compensate for their lack of teaching experience.

International experience and previous volunteering can give volunteer teachers the «cultural proficiency» (Sherraden *et al.* 2008) to make up for their foreignness and adapt to

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[3]   Plan My Gap Year – Bali English teaching programme description.

local customs, methods of learning and social norms in order to communicate better with students and colleagues. Prior volunteers usually come in with more tempered expectations, having already gone through deep reflections, exchanges with fellow volunteers and local people (Lough 2009, Wearing & McGehee 2013) and are likely to be familiar with the difficulties of the education IVS sector. While international and volunteering experience is nowhere a requirement, it is desired by many organisations. AVI, for example, put special emphasis on «soft competencies like adaptability» when recruiting volunteers.[4]

The *time* that volunteers can give significantly impacts IVS outcomes and it is often related to what type of person participates. Youth have generally much more time available than full-time employed professionals (McBride & Lough 2007), especially teachers who share very similar school dates. In the summer, most schools abroad are closed, and leaving for a few weeks or months during the academic year is rather unusual. This points to the difficulty of recruiting experienced teachers for long-term commitments and explains why skill-based long-term IVS in education (as well as in other fields) will hardly become an economy of scale, like low-skilled, short-term volunteering.

4.2. Programme attributes and institutional capacity

Programme attributes refer to «the features of the volunteer-sending and volunteer-hosting programmes», while institutional capacity «addresses de context of the service experience, defines who participates and how they serve, influences the ability of the institution to leverage individual capacity, and shapes the impact of volunteer action» (Sherraden *et al.* 2008, p. 397). The institutional aspects of IVS are crucial in that they not only facilitate a service, but they have the power to shape the characteristics of volunteers that we just discussed and provide the setting that determines the potential impact of the service.

4.2.1. IVS programme attributes

Sending organisations vary in their objectives and their capacity, which ultimately shapes the programmes and influences IVS outcomes (Sherraden *et al.* 2008). This study reviewed four *types of organisations:* government agencies, non-profit NGOs, social

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[4] AVI interviewee 2017.

enterprises and for-profit companies; yet there are many more such as religious organisations, universities, etc., that operate education focused IVS. There is no evidence of what type of organisations engage more in education IVS. There are often additional layers of organisations facilitating IVS. These can be local NGOs, state-run or private schools, and other instances. Most from our sample count with a local partner organisation, which welcomes the volunteers, place them in a partner school and follows up on the programme. However, the relationship between the sending and the host organisations vary wildly depending on their practices and ability to build up trust (Palacios 2010). Sending organisations vary a lot in their objectives, funding, size, recruitment policies, capacity and their management of the volunteer; however, each type brings inherent tensions and trade-offs in their workings. Government agencies, for example, are usually more accountable to the service beneficiaries, since their international (even political) image depends on their performance. As reflected in our data, they are interested in sending only high skilled, capable volunteers to ensure the best outcomes. On the other hand, the thorough screening of applicants makes the application and selection process more bureaucratic, slow and inefficient. Indeed, the group of three government agencies had the highest volunteer requirements in average, but also take around three-four months to select the candidates. Some scholars worry about the role of increasing for-profit organisations, pointing to their profit-driven tendency to cater the needs of their primary costumer, the volunteer, rather than the needs of the host communities (Wearing & McGehee 2013). So far, no comprehensive study has been conducted comparing practice differences between the diverse types of sending organisations.

Each organisation writes its own *mission and goals* which, in the IVS context, are usually somewhere between development aid and international understanding (Sherraden *et al.* 2008). While both ends of the spectrum are valuable for education in developing countries, those emphasizing the former will focus on expertise and therefore recruit higher skilled volunteers (Sherraden *et al.* 2008). However, our empirical findings suggest that it is the specific interest in contributing to the education sector, rather than the type of organisation or emphasis on development, that shapes the IVS model offered. The education-focused NGOs WorldTeach and T2TGlobal have the highest requirements, most intensive training and farthest-reaching programmes. If they had the resources of government agencies, they could probably outperform them. Furthermore, social enterprises pledge higher social commitment.

In fact, those examined here generally showed stronger involvement of the host community in the programming and more complex recruitment processes than their for-profit counterparts.[5]

Organisations can face limitations in the *costs and funding* of their programmes, as well as their *sponsorship,* which impact their size, capacity and influences their mission and goals. Government agencies are the biggest and best funded organisations, yet interestingly they offer the least variety of programmes. Besides being more selective, this may be due to the allowances they pay to volunteers and the much higher bureaucratic costs they incur. Fee-charging for-profit organisations, on the other hand, rely on those fees and therefore are less selective and operate in economies of scale offering many different programmes, or «products» (Wearing & McGehee 2013, p. 124), in order to keep the clients and the money flowing. Further, one NGO, T2T, expressed their wish to extend their programmes beyond the ten days they currently offer but regret the costs were too high.

Recruitment policies will determine the profile of the volunteer and what they can potentially contribute to education in the host community. As we learned, IVS can have a specialized or non-specialized volunteer model (Geudens *et al.* 2013). While all three assessed for-profit organisations operate with non-specialized volunteers, and all three government agencies with specialized volunteers, a greater variation can be found in the other two groups. Most organisations that want to make use of motivated volunteers, instead of rejecting an application, they redirect it to a «matching process», which ensures the participants' skills are put well into use. Applicants are contacted by an agent, who discusses their skill sets, interests and expectations, and subsequently accepts or redirects the volunteer to the programme with the best match.[6] This match between volunteer skills, expectations, and programme goals can be key to predicting IVS outcomes (Brook *et al.* 2007). Yet the matching process varies in quality. Measures of this can be the requirement of an interview or extensive individualized exchange, as observed in 2WayDevelopment. Another measure is the time applicants wait for their acceptance confirmation, which can go from months (PC, and AVI), to as little as 48 hours (GV, and PMGY). The neglect of thorough recruitment and matching processes may lead to the volunteer feeling overwhelmed by the responsibilities, and students being taught by underskilled individuals. Scholars have emphasized the importance of host organisation participation in the programming, and the definition of objectives, to ensure real local needs are

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[5] However, since the label «social enterprise» is often self-assigned, the real incentives of for-profit organisations to put host community wellbeing above volunteer satisfactions should be further studied.

[6] GVI interviewee 2017.

addressed (Palacios 2010, Lupoli & Morse 2014). This concern for host participation is expressed by GVI, 2WD and AVI.

4.2.2. IVS institutional capacity

IVS sending organisations have all shapes and sizes, which influence the programmes they run as well as the volunteer recruitment and management practices. First and foremost, available *resources* influence the planning, management and effectiveness of programmes (SOS 2000). Government agencies are generally well resourced and are able to offer allowances to volunteers, which act as incentives to commit to the long-term projects they operate. Unfortunately, the data gathered do not allow drawing conclusions on the use of resources. However, this aspect has important implications on education IVS as it determines the possibility of the organisation to offer pre-placement trainings and extensive in-country support (Sherraden *et al.* 2008), which proves very important in education IVS. Although mostly neglected, resources also allow for regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, crucial to measure their impact and identify flaws. The challenges in measuring education outcomes makes access to resources even more necessary.

While we learned that volunteer expertise is crucial to quality education outcomes, *training* can go a long way in compensating expertise gaps (Darling-Hammond *et al.* 2005). Teach for America (TFA), a well-studied volunteer-based teaching programme in the US that proved to boost learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond *et al.* 2005), recruits distinguished graduates (from any field) teach for a year in disadvantaged schools in America, after completing an exhaustive summer training. They also provide intensive support and monitor the volunteers' performance. The organisations reviewed all have very different *training, support and supervision* models. Peace Corps offers the most comprehensive pre-placement training, which lasts three months and continues with regular in-service training. Similar to TFA, though not as competitive, WorldTeach requires one month of training and also offers regular in-service training conferences and weekly check-ins with feedback. Practices like this ensure that high quality service is being provided to beneficiaries and strengthen the skills of the volunteer. The rest of the training models vary in terms of length: from a few hours to a few weeks; their objective: international understanding, technical training or language training; their availability: required, optional, optional with a fee or unavailable, and their format: workshops, online interactive programmes or just reading material. Basic in-country orientation is a

common practice in every organisation as well as in-country support from sending or host organisation staff. However, de-briefings after placements are not such a widespread practice, which is a lost opportunity to reflect over the achievements, intercultural encounters and personal development (Simpson 2004). A noteworthy after-placement model is VSO's resettlement programme where volunteers meet to reflect, share experiences and benefit from individual resettlement support from VSO.

Organisational networks created by IVS in education can greatly benefit the local community by establishing partnerships for funding, advocacy and further reciprocal cooperation (Sherraden *et al.* 2008). An example from own experience: a volunteer teaching English in a secondary school in Ghana carried out a letter exchange between her students and pupils from a secondary school in Austria. This exchange boosted motivation in the local kids to improve their English and forge international friendships, and gave an educational opportunity to counteract stereotyped cultural images. Additionally, when the school in Ghana got destroyed by extreme weather, the Austrian «partner» was able to assist financially for restorations. Organisational networks create opportunities for reciprocal cooperation (Lough 2013), especially in the field of education where the exchange of ideas and ways of teaching can contribute to education innovation (T2TGlobal).

The level and direction of *accountability* has huge implications in what interests are placed at the forefront and thus influence IVS outcomes. As we have argued before, sponsorship and type of organisation may influence their priorities. For-profit companies are likely to be more accountable to the paying volunteer and prioritize their preferences (Wearing & McGehee 2013). Government agencies may be generally more accountable given that they face more scrutiny from the international community. Or else, organisations may try to become more accountable to host communities by building closer relationships based on trust (Palacios 2010). Accountability efforts by GVI and 2WayDevelopment, include involving representatives of host communities in the planning stage of the programme, where needs and volunteer requirements are set. AVI additionally requires the final approval from the host organisation of selected candidates before they can proceed to their placement. These give host organisations ownership of the IVS programme and ensure local needs are addressed (VSO 2016).

4.3. IVS Action

A range of *service activities* fall under education IVS. The most common, but not only form of education IVS, is teaching. Providing primary education, tutoring and teaching English, among others, are the most common activities reported (Lough *et al.* 2009), which resemble the programmes from the sample. Most recently, organisations began to focus on more long-term outcomes through teacher training. This is a model encouraged by T2TGlobal, 2WD and AVI. Educational services may also include designing curricula, giving workshops on nutrition, female hygiene or HIV, and running extracurricular activities in school. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive research or consistent reporting on the specific activities that volunteers cover. What exactly volunteers do does matter, however; for example, teaching a science class independently requires a different set of skills than providing support to the local teacher or running an extracurricular sports club (Rice 2003). It is important that the activities undertaken match the volunteer's skills to avoid low quality service. GVI emphasizes that activities' goals should be aligned with what can be realistically achieved in the time the volunteer can offer, in order to avoid inflating stakeholders' expectations.

A strong determinant of the outcomes of any of these activities is the *length and continuity* of the service. This refers to the length of service of a volunteer, not the length of the whole programme. Most of the programmes run on the ground by host organisations are permanent programmes, but count with the temporary service of volunteers, having either constant turnover of volunteers, or occasionally no volunteer at all for some time. Evidence on the effects of short-term and long-term IVS is inconclusive but concerns on the lack of continuity (Keesbury 2003) and duplication in volunteer efforts (Loiseau *et al.* 2016) apply to the teaching context. The negative effects of high teacher turnover are well documented (Ronfeldt *et al.* 2013), thus short-term teaching positions can be disrupting for students who need to adapt to a new volunteer every few weeks. Scholars see a higher developmental potential in long-term IVS (White & Cliffe 2000). Although possible negative effects of long-term volunteer teaching positions are not as well studied, general concerns of local jobs substitution should be considered. Short-term IVS is often described as less impactful, ineffective and resource consuming (Guttentag 2009); however, depending on the volunteer's skills, short-term projects may be quite impactful (Lough *et al.* 2011). T2TGlobal believe in the latter with their high-skilled volunteer-based one-two week teacher-training programme. Here again, this short-term IVS is only a component of a permanent programme. In this case, however, the sending organisation also runs the programme on the ground. The organisations of our sample offer placements ranging from one week to two years, with government agencies

in the higher range and for-profit organisations, NGO, and social enterprises scattered in the lower-middle range. While some of them require a commitment of specific periods of time, most others leave the length of the placement to the participant's choice.

There is not much literature on *group placements* in education IVS. However, scholars suggest that although group placements are more resource effective, they may inhibit *cross-cultural immersion* and the creation of meaningful relationships with local hosts. Even if teaching IVS is an *individual activity,* volunteer teachers may also benefit from the incentive of having to build relationships and trust with local teachers outside the classroom (Farndale 2009). Deeper immersion in the host community not only increases effectiveness, but strengthens a sense of camaraderie, leading to «genuine, fair and respectful reciprocal relations» (Devereux 2006, p. 18). *Reciprocity* is a good practice in IVS (Lough 2016, Chen 2017) that results in meaningful collaboration and learning. This sense of reciprocity is very present in T2TGlobal's «culture of sharing».[7] However, the *direction of service* continues to be predominantly North-to-South across organisations, which, without appropriate goals and management, may contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes (Raymond & Hall 2008).

4.4. IVS Outcomes

We have just reviewed some factors that influence IVS outcomes in education. However, we still know very little about tangible effects on the *host communities* (Sherraden *et al.* 2008); this is due to the preponderance of volunteer-focused research and the lack of rigorous research methods used in this field. Most IVS impact studies are based on retrospective recounts and perceptions (Powell & Bratović 2007, Lough *et al.* 2009, Loiseau *et al.* 2016), but none to my knowledge have assessed measurable developmental impacts. Equally little is being evaluated by the sending and host organisations. From the sample only about half reported having regular monitoring systems or published reports (PC, VSO, AVI, GVI, 2WD, and PA). Most impact assessments, however, usually include numbers about the reach of their projects, *e.g.*, «410,000 hours supporting education and literacy projects» (IVHQ 2017) or «volunteers provided educational support to 20,580 students across 350 schools» (Projects Abroad 2015), but little about their effectiveness or quality. One interviewee noted that «education is incredibly difficult to measure»[8] in terms of quality and learning outcomes; let alone identify

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[7]   T2TGlobal interviewee 2017.

[8]   T2TGlobal interviewee.

project or volunteer specific effects. This is indeed a challenge scholars and policy makers have always struggled with. Financial and human resources will be crucial in overcoming this deficiency.

5

Conclusion

Every year, thousands of volunteers are sent to disadvantaged communities to teach and support local educators. In fact, IVS has become an alternative development cooperation system and significant provider of education in the developing world. Volunteers do it for a number of reasons: to «give back to society», to gain skills, to travel and expand their cultural understanding, but we still know little about their developmental impact on the host communities. To assess that impact, first we need to understand what influences the outcomes. I showed how segregated analysis can help identify and discuss the various factors, as done by Sherraden *et al.* (2008) with their conceptual model of IVS impacts. This model was applied on the particular context of education IVS, demonstrating how the relevance of factors and their effects are specific to the field of service. We found that volunteer teachers contribute most directly with their motivation as well as financial and teaching supplies. On the other hand, learning outcomes depend first and foremost on volunteer teacher certification, preparation and experience. While a few organisations have very high entry requirements, findings show that teaching certification, experience and training are still optional for many (especially for-profit) sending organisations and depend a lot on their objectives. The increase of gap year providers, the lack of time of experienced teachers and the superficial recruitment policies suggest that a large share of undertrained, inexperienced, young volunteers are being deployed to front line teaching positions, probably contributing to the «parallel cadre of undertrained, underpaid, often younger, inexperienced teachers» (Chudgar *et al.* 2014, p. 150) in developing countries. This is especially dangerous when volunteers function as a band-aid solution and keep the government from investing in local and better-trained teachers. Add to the unguaranteed teaching expertise the cultural differences that increase the difficulty of teaching and, if poorly managed, reinforce stereotypes. So, is IVS doomed to hinder education quality and contribute to the «hidden exclusion»? Findings suggest that not necessarily. Deficiencies can be compensated. We found that pre-placement training, support, supervision and after de-briefs are essential and can go a long way in compensating for lack of teaching and international

experience. Also, the necessary skills depend a lot on the service activity that the volunteer will undertake and with thorough matching processes during the recruitment of volunteers, organisations can guarantee that the needs of host communities are met, and that volunteers feel secure and qualified for their responsibilities. The length, thoroughness and quality of training and support programmes as well as the matching processes that sending organisations carry out vary enormously and are yet to be better institutionalized. The analysis also shows inherent tensions according to the type of the sending organisation. While generalisations are still difficult to draw, the findings show evident differences in the recruitment and management practices. The low requirements, fast acceptance rates, and overemphasis of motivation over skills by for-profit organisations may be evidence of what Wearing and McGehee (2013) feared: a focus on the «client's», that is the volunteer's interests, rather than on the host community's needs. Nevertheless, further studies with more representative samples are necessary to understand inherent incentives across the diverse types of organisations.

The problem is the presumption that even untrained volunteers coming from wealthy nations may do a better job than the local teachers. What has been termed as «the colonial mentality» (David & Okazaki 2006) leads host organisations and host communities to think that «we [the locals] will never be same, you [the foreign volunteers] will always be higher» (Loiseau *et al.* 2016), and volunteers to feel comfortable doing a job in developing countries that they would have never been allowed to do at home because «since it's a different country, different rules apply» (Loiseau *et al.* 2016). In fact, sending organisations shape this mentality through their discourse and practices. The good news is that they can equally counteract these stereotypes through their programming and interactions.

I agree that sending organisations are a «key factor in maximizing good practice» (Wearing & McGehee 2013, p. 124). Scholars increasingly attempt to identify best practices (Kumaran & Pappas 2012, Lough & Tiessen 2016), and some codes of good practice have started to emerge (The Comhlámh Code of Good Practice, Investing in Volunteers Quality Standard) although none are specialized by field of service. Strikingly, only some organisations guide their work by some type of standards or code of good practice. The huge disparities in volunteer recruitment and management, and consequently in the quality of service, point to the need of universal standards and efforts to apply them. I also found the lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms, which explains the little knowledge we have about impact on host communities. This is sometimes justified by the difficulty to measure education outcomes. However, to guarantee the developmental impact potential of education

IVS, organisations will need to integrate M&E mechanisms into their programming, assessing their performance and potential improvements. Finally, there is a temptation of overemphasizing the role of sending organisations and their programming. While they do hold a primary shaping role, there are factors and local dynamics that are out of their control, and regardless of how responsible or careful one may be, the awareness and reach a sending organisation can have is limited. I therefore encourage further research on how local attributes and dynamics influence IVS outcomes.

This study aimed to contribute to the theorization of IVS that together with increased efforts in impact research may allow us to elaborate and diffuse education specific standards and best practices. Hopefully, this analysis serves as inspiration for future segregated analysis by field of service and as a guide for education IVS providers. I join the moral call to focus on host communities' needs and guarantee the provision of high quality services. Let us remember to not sacrifice quality by the urge of «filling in gaps». IVS brings together important values of solidarity and cooperation in global citizens and deserves the opportunity and effort to be improved as a sector and increase its potential developmental impact.

6

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