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A conceptual framework to understand academic student volunteerism

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Abstract

This paper develops a conceptual framework to understand the value of an increasing number of university study programmes that send students to the global south by learning through volunteering. We ask the research question what determines the benefit that these activities bring to the host community. To understand this, we conceptualise these activities as academic student volunteerism and propose a framework to understand the value of these activities using Callahan & Thomas's (2005) volunteer tourism framework. We examine our research question using a single case study of a Minor programme in a Dutch university, exploring how course design and student selection affect student behaviour as an antecedent step to creating student benefits. We identify six kinds of factors that appear to promote 'deeper' (better) contributions and argue that these six factors require further analysis to better realise university contributions to societal development in Global South contexts.

Keywords: Student Volunteerism; Academic volunteering; Global south; Sustainable development; University engagement; Knowledge society

1 Introduction

Academic Student Volunteerism (ASV), where students undertake volunteering projects to help less successful communities often located in remote places is not a novel phenomenon, particularly in degrees within Development Studies, Social Entrepreneurship or Tropical Medicine. Such excursions have as their pedagogic aim providing the students with a practical experience of applying their acquired knowledge in different contexts, something potentially useful in their later careers. The notion of “volunteering” intuitively makes the impression of intrinsically altruistic and beneficial (Carpenter & Myers, 2007, Rehberg, 2005). However, international volunteerism has latterly been the subject of debate as to whether it is universally beneficial (Guttentag, 2011). Questions have been raised about whether both beneficiary and volunteer in fact benefit as much as intermediaries, something that is particularly evident with Volunteer Tourism, a form of International Volunteering using commercial intermediaries to arrange placements (Barkham, 2006; Brodie, 2006; Popham, 2015).

Although the context of student volunteerism does differ from volunteer tourism, these criticisms of international volunteering might also be applicable in some degree to ASV. Callahan and Thomas (2005) distinguished volunteer tourism in terms of the depth or otherwise both of the projects undertaken as well as the volunteers, characterising depth in terms of altruistic, idealistic, and impact led, with shallow activities and volunteers being profit-driven, opportunistic and ego-centric. The large volume of recent research on international volunteerism has generated substantive understanding of the motivations and decision frameworks of volunteers (e.g. McGehee, 2014, Lupoli, Morse, Bailey & Schelhas, 2014, Taplin, Dredge & Scherrer, 2014, Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2012, Wearing & McGehee, 2013, Zahra & McGehee, 2013, Sin, 2009). But this has not been paralleled with research on the student volunteering phenomenon, and taking into account the increasing number of universities promoting student volunteerism, there is a critical need for a deeper understanding of ASV, in both its positive and negative aspects.

In this paper we therefore ask what influences the ‘depth’ of academic student volunteers? We conceptualise ASV by transposing Callahan & Thomas’s (2005) volunteer tourism literature to the academic domain. We address the research question drawing on a single case study of an academic student volunteering activity in Uganda operated by a Dutch technical university. With a mix of non-participant observation and formal interviews, the study analyses the ways

that the program construction influences the behavioural choices of the participants in terms of their 'depth'. This distinction allows in turn to determine whether universities interested in maximising the benefits of their volunteers for their beneficiary communities should either place their efforts into the construction of courses, or in selecting students with intrinsically deep behaviours. On this basis we identify more specifically particular criteria for universities to maximise the community benefit emerging from their ASV.

1. Understanding different kinds of volunteering

2.1 Conceptualising international volunteer tourism

International volunteerism is concerned with humanitarian and environmental projects intending to serve communities in need, to drive progress towards sustainable development (Wearing & McGehee, 2013). In this context, volunteering projects are typically related to community welfare activities, environmental conservation and research, education, construction, business development and healthcare (Guttentag, 2009). Barbieri, Santos and Katsube (2012, p. 510) characterise international volunteer tourism as encompassing 'the leisure and recreation component associated with tourism, along with the desire to contribute to solving deep social illnesses such as poverty, gender inequality, and parentless childhood'.

One of the key perspectives that emerged within international volunteerism studies is the idea of volunteer tourism, defined here by Sin as 'a form of tourism where the tourists volunteer in local communities as part of his or her travel' (Sin, 2009, p. 480). Within this overall phenomenon, a number of key distinctions can be made between different categories of international volunteer tourists based on their motivations for volunteering and their perception of value attached to the local community benefit (Chen & Chen, 2011). Wearing and McGehee (2013, p. 122) noted that in general it can be noted that the reasons that determine why a volunteer chooses to travel may differ from other kinds of tourist, and on that basis it is possible to distinguish three kinds of volunteer tourist.

One motivation might be that the volunteer is primarily interested in the travel element: Brown (2005), for example examined the 'motivational factors of volunteer tourism from the perspectives of vacationers who spend a small proportion of their trip volunteering at the destination' (p. 492). The author concluded that volunteer vacationers appear to ascribe primary value to the opportunities for that emerge in educating children and bonding with family members, in delivering camaraderie; these volunteers seem to be driven by a sense of adventure

and desires for exploration and novelty; strongly motivated by factors such as love and social needs alongside their learning needs. Within this group, a distinction can be made between volunteer-minded and vacation-minded participants (Smith & Holmes 2009): Sin (2009) found that ‘at least among those interviewed, motivating factors for volunteer tourists were “to travel” rather than “to contribute” or volunteer’ (p. 497). Likewise a number of comparable studies (*inter alia* Barkham, 2006; McGloin & Georgeou, 2015; Wearing & McGehee, 2013) identified that the volunteers did not primarily have altruistic intentions, but were motivated by a desire of self-gratification, self-development, adventure, cultural understanding, or being able to claim the experience on the resume.

A second category of international volunteer tourists are commercial volunteers (Coghlan & Noakes, 2012, Guttentag, 2012, Guttentag, 2009), those that pay an agent to arrange a volunteering holiday. The agent in this case may be drawn from a wide range of organisations, such as private companies, not-for-profit organisations, charities, and universities, and themselves have a wide range of motivates (Guttentag, 2009). As emphasised by McGehee (2014, p. 847), ‘Volunteer tourism activities have expanded from a few little-known and primarily nongovernmental organizations to a multitude of entities across the whole spectrum of enterprise forms from full nonprofits to openly for-profit ventures’. Nowadays, volunteer tourism projects are primarily promoted by commercial for-profit business firms based in a developed country rather than a developing country where most of the volunteering occurs (Coghlan & Noakes, 2012). The emphasis in these activities lies in on both volunteering and vacation, because of the additional costs that are made above a standard vacation, and therefore the volunteers themselves tend to have more altruistic motivations than the touristic volunteers. At the same time, the commercial focus of agents leads often to relatively low requirements for participants’ skills (Guttentag, 2012). This may create a mismatch between volunteers’ expectations and the local hosting community’s needs.

A third perspective is that of volunteer vacations (sometimes referred to by the rather cumbersome title of VolunTourism). According to Brown and Morrison (2003, p. 73), ‘volunteer vacations can be defined as giving time and energy for a good cause and paying for the privilege’. In these activities, volunteering is the primary motivation for travel and the main activity undertaken at the destination (Smith & Holmes, 2009). There is a trend of increasing volunteer numbers for projects that require particular skill sets to deliver scientific, ecological, social service, or other project types, often regarded as more directly related to contributing to international development (Holmes, Smith, Lockstone-Binney & Baum, 2010). The focus lies

primarily on the service delivery, offering at the same time travel and adventure experiences for short-term periods (Brown & Morrison, 2003). Brown and Morrison (2003) identified certain characteristics that were associated with a propensity to participate in volunteer vacations: people who volunteer in their home communities, people with higher levels of education, and people who vacation more frequently and with higher household incomes. One variant of this are Gap Year Volunteering, Lyons *et al.* (2012, p. 361), arguing that ‘the valorisation of cross-cultural understanding and promotion of an ethic of global citizenship are at the forefront of the recent development and proliferation of international “gap year” travel programs and policies’.

These distinctions are primarily concerned with the volunteer themselves and make judgements on the goodness of that volunteering activity on the basis of those personal characteristics; volunteer concern with driving local development is regarded as positive whilst a concern with personal benefit is regarded as negative. But there is a recent trend towards attempting to distinguish activities on the basis of the realised benefits (and potentially disbenefits) in hosting communities (e.g. Hammersley, 2014, Barbieri *et al.*, 2012, Guttentag, 2009). Guttentag (2009) summarizes several potential negative characteristics from volunteer tourism, including neglecting locals’ desires; hindering or undermining work-in-progress or delivering unsatisfactory work; displacing local workers and employment opportunities, reinforcing dependency cultures, as well as reinforcing ‘othering’ between volunteer and host, and potential cultural change. Conversely, McGehee (2014) noted that well designed and implemented international volunteerism projects offer opportunities for ‘altruism, self-development, giving back to the host community, participating in community and international development, and improving cultural understanding’ (p. 848).

2.2 Towards a framework for Academic Student Volunteerism

Callahan and Thomas (2005) proposed a framework for volunteer tourism which sought to represent both the elements of success, making a distinction between the tourists and their motivations (are they motivated by vacation or volunteering) and the projects, whether they were seeking to deliver change in local communities, or were a means of recruiting tourists to purchase agent services. Their framework distinguishes between the altruistic orientation (volunteers, delivering change) as being deep volunteer tourism, and the selfish orientation (vacationers, recruiting customers) as shallow volunteer tourism. ‘Deep’ projects and/or volunteers are altruistic, idealistic and with a focus on making an impact, whilst ‘shallow’

projects/ volunteers are profit-driven, opportunistic and with an ego-centric approach. We contend that this distinction set is a useful way of categorising student volunteerism, between shallow and deep students, and shallow and deep placements, whilst acknowledging that an educational placement is not identical to a holiday, and the scope of the kinds of activities that are used for placements have not been designed with the intention of recruiting paying holidaymakers¹.

To transpose the Callahan and Thomas (2005) model to the Academic Volunteerism context, it is necessary to consider their six factors which determine the depth or shallowness of project and tourism. Their six factors for project depth are:

- (a) Participation of duration – longer placements drive deeper activities
- (b) Choice of destination – being driven by good cause drives depth
- (c) Idealism of participants – higher idealism is associated with higher depth
- (d) Skill relevance – selection mechanisms which target relevant skills improve depth
- (e) Pro-social orientation – the more the project involves planning creating impact, the deeper the activity.
- (f) Local involvement – the more local actors are involved in co-determining the activities the greater the depth of activity

In the case of volunteers, Callahan and Thomas (2005) also characterise those volunteers in terms of the same factors applied to individuals:

- (a) Duration of participation permitted by the academic course
- (b) Choice of destination and the extent to which students are forced to take available projects or select their own destination
- (c) Idealism – the value the participant places on making a local contribution
- (d) Skills fit – whether the individual is selected on the basis of their skills' relevance to available projects
- (e) The willingness and capacity of student to involve host community in project design
- (f) The willingness and capacity of student to involve host community in project implementation

These dimensions are also applicable to Volunteer Tourism in an academic context, and can be transposed to Student Academic Volunteering. In terms of duration, placements that are driven by the delivery of a task would appear to be allow deeper placements than those driven by minimum project length requirements for module accreditation. Where destination choice is driven by the availability of projects would appear to drive deeper behaviours than those driven by popular projects or locations. Selecting those students who are seeking to contribute to their hosts' contexts would be deeper than

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those who are seeking to maximise their personal experience; likewise selecting students in terms of the relevance of their skill set to the project, and their pro-social orientation would raise depth of engagement. Finally, developing long-term ongoing relations with local representatives allowing them to shape the way the projects are presented to students would also increase the depth of behaviour. These characteristics are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Academic Volunteerism Programmes characteristics determining characteristics

	Volunteer Tourists	Student Academic Volunteerism
Duration of participation	Flexibility in excursion length Flexibility in terms of work commitment on site	Occupation with assignments of low value to organization
Choice of destination	Level of focus on regional characteristics vs. on project characteristics	Level of focus on popular vs. practical project types
Targeting idealists	Trade-off; volunteer vs. host interests	Focus on impact on host vs. impact on student Flexibility in host choice
Participant skills	Level of qualifications needed Depth of preparation and evaluation	Selection Process
Pro-social orientation	Level of individual volunteers added value to the organization Ratio of "Give vs Take"	Level of involvement in project design
Local involvement	Depth of agent/ host relationship Involvement of host in project design, selection and planning Level of general risk awareness and mitigation of negative impacts	Local interests representation in students assignment structure

We therefore propose a framework for academic volunteerism with three main elements (a) course design (b) student characteristics and (c) host community benefit, with it being through the host community benefit that the sustainable development goals being achieved. We contend that deeper courses (offering longer placements on the basis of existing projects, targeting students who are idealists with project-relevant skills, and allowing community involvement in project design and execution) will attract 'deeper' student volunteers. Deeper

student volunteers (who work for longer on useful projects, with altruistic orientation and relevant skills, and a willingness and capacity to allow local community influence in project design and execution) will in turn be associated with more beneficial outcomes, and ultimately with the delivery of societal benefit. Our operational research question then is to consider the relationship between course design and student orientation, to ask the question, does designing ‘deeper’ academic volunteerism activities lead to the attraction of ‘deeper’ student volunteers?

2. Research methodology

This research question is premised upon a transposition of the volunteer tourism framework to a similar domain, academic volunteerism, where is it not clear whether this transformation is valid. This means that the research design is explicitly exploratory, exploring the applicability of the framework as much as the associations between the variables in our causal chain (the project, the student and the host community impact). We have therefore chosen for a qualitative study looking at the characteristics in depth of the course and the students, and to explore through interviewing and participant observation whether the course design appears to have had an influence on the students. We do not claim a universality for our findings, but instead seek to iterate our initial academic volunteerism framework as proposed in Table 1. This modified volunteer tourism framework may help in ensuring that a growing number of student courses involving some degree of local placement also optimise university societal contribution by optimising the local benefits those placements bring.

The case study that we have used for this paper comes from a single programme, in this case an undergraduate Minor course that sends undergraduate students to volunteer in the global south. A minor course in the European context is an option (or requirement) for students that they take a course from outside their primary study focus; they may take modules within other degree programmes or they may be created specifically as stand-alone units to allow students to meet Minor requirements. Minor volunteering courses typically mix a preparatory phase with an execution phase; this execution phase may take the form of a study trip, it may be delivered virtually, or it may be delivered in situ; it is this last form of volunteering with which we are concerned, following Callahan & Thomas’s observation that a number of months are necessary for the project to have a depth antecedent to societal value. The Minor programme selected sends students to work on pre-allocated projects, and the case study involved activities centred around a community centre project in a rural Kenyan village.

There were three elements to the data gathering. Firstly, data was gathered from material produced by the sending university on the Minor course itself, to understand the choices made in terms of the course structure and the Minor's intentions for the students. This was complemented by interview data with the Module coordinators of the corresponding Minor programme (using Skype) to provide further insight into the structure, design and intentionality of the Minor Programme.

The other element of data gathered was participant observation. The fieldwork was gathered in a period in which the researcher was located within and working on the project (as a student participating in a different Academic Volunteering programme). The researcher was therefore interacting with these academic volunteers and was able to observe and interpret the various characteristics suggestive of depth or shallowness, and the ways in which the participants related them to the requirements imposed by the course. The researcher was also able to observe the degree of local involvement in the design and the execution of the project, and the ways in which local hosts were able to steer the activities towards deeper ends. Particular care was taken with the ethical aspects of this project, relating to the involvement of human subjects in the research; care was taken not to judge or evaluate individual participants, but rather to record the stories that the volunteers told about how the course requirements had shaped the depth of their own participationⁱⁱ. All data was therefore stored in anonymous and confidential form (omitting information on student, host organisation, university, minor, major or gender), and the case study is presented in a synthetic anonymised way in order to protect the research subjects interest.

3. Characterising the depth of the course

The case study Minor Programme was established in the middle of the 2000s, in response to an issue emerging within student and alumni consultations of a desire to include global development issues within their graduation dissertation projects. In response to this feedback, a group of teachers with a background on entrepreneurship in development countries developed the specific Minor activity. The specific emphasis on the programme was on social entrepreneurship rather than service delivery. As the Module Coordinator noted, suitable projects for the minor were required to have “entrepreneurial character, so it is not service delivery to help in the short term... but that capacity is built to deal with problems in (...) organizations”, with the overall goal of the module being to “to build up expertise for technology transfer to developing countries”.

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The course operated by recruiting students through an application process, in which students were selected based on their grades along with a motivation letter explaining why they are interested in learning in the intercultural context or the volunteering activities. Each year there had been between 110 and 120 applications, and the module coordinators selected the best 60 of those to follow the module. Once students were selected to participate, they were then matched with projects proposed to the Module Team via a ‘project fair’; students then ranked the projects for participation and on those rankings were selected into groups of 2-4 students. The finalisation of the projects followed a three stage process, in which the student groups design a project plan, in cooperation with the host, as well as taking preparatory courses. During the execution phase, the supervision of the student is provided locally, with high degree of local flexibility. In the final phase, the students’ projects are evaluated via final report. In the table below (Table 2), we use the framework for course design to characterise the course in terms of its depth and/ or shallowness in the six variables of our analytic framework.

The construction of the course saw it demonstrate both deep and shallow characteristics in terms of a programme. There was a high degree of opportunism within the way that students were allocated to projects, and projects were identified on a historic basis which meant that there was no opportunity to fit the projects to student skills in a systematic, synoptic way. There was a degree of activity from the university in seeking for example to select highly motivated students for the course, and in developing long-term working relationships with the projects sites to gain a better understanding of what these projects needed. This mix of depth and shallowness was also reflected in the student behaviour, and more anecdotally in the level of the overall contribution made by the project to local development and capacity building. The main characteristics within the course design that drove depth of interaction were perhaps unsurprisingly the length of interaction, but also the flexibility the students had to negotiate and change the direction of the project to reflect local circumstances. What drove shallow behaviour tended to be the lack of difficult in choosing the minor course, which mitigated towards seeing the experience as being useful. These findings are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Programme characteristics.

Factor	Shallow Characteristics	Deep Characteristics
Flexibility in duration of participants		Strong focus on specific project type Little flexibility in terms of options/ alternative host

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		A lot of flexibility in terms of assignments
Promotion of project v. the destination	Descriptions do not ask for specific skills Selection based on volunteers preference	Focus on the project and its host organization
Altruistic v. self-interest	Selection not too strict Still quite a lot of places (60) Participation in groups	Idealistic underlying Idea & Mission and Balanced focus on student and host Selection Process
Skills of participants	Assignment to project not based on students' individual skills Evaluation not very intensive	Selection based on students' motivation/ commitment A portfolio of courses directly relevant for projects/ excursion Integration of evaluative component in final projects
Active/Passive participation	No proactive mitigation based on research (No coordination between students/ local partner prior to excursion)	Active selection and evaluation of hosts and students Engagement of students to improve projects and to cooperate with the project partner Risk mitigation through interventions
Level of contribution to locals	Host not involved in student selection Hosts influence on project design indirect	Integration of the local interests in curriculum and assignments Desire for strong and long term agent-host relationships

4. Characterising student response to designed depth

It is clear from the fieldwork that the students did not always respond to the planned intentions designed into the Module. Firstly, despite the effort placed by the module to foreground the good cause (through the use of the project fair approach), it was clear that the students made their choice in optimising between two variables, the good cause/ particular project, but also for the destination, in this case Kenya. The project had been designed to ensure that there was sufficient time allowed to make a contribution to the local community; the students were on site

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for three months, and the preparation phase had helped them to bond as a team, work efficiently and keep to their plans. But at the same time, the students had also planned their free time, and therefore did what the project required and at the same time participated in tourist activities. The motivation letter was intended to select students on the basis of altruism and prevent selfishness, and all the students had some desire to do good, to make a difference, and to be good people, but at the same time saw no inconsistency between creating a local benefit and ensuring the personal, experiential and professional benefit.

The team selected had a suitable skill set for carrying out the project, bringing together people with engineering, technical and business skills, and these fitted well with the project at hand. At the same time, the elements of the course that related to ‘making a difference’, the preparatory courses and the evaluation of the deeper understanding, became peripheral in the module, with the excitement of the placement dominating the student engagement. The students were active in allowing the local organisation to shape the planning and execution of the project; notably, the project team changed the project plan in a substantive way during the planning phase, and there was an effective co-operation between the project team and local hosts to ensure that the project, a piece of market research, was useful to the local host organisation. But at the same time, the students were passive in the face of considerable inputs from the local hosts (who had been hosting these groups for several years), and there were less interests in activities which were not immediately eligible for assessment (such as the impact evaluation). These characteristics are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Effects on depth of student behaviour.

Factors	Shallow Characteristics	Deep Characteristics
Importance of the destination	Desire for leisure and recreation	Medium enthusiasm for the project
Duration of participation	Taking many opportunities to enjoy free time Putting time into volunteering, but only as much as needed. Trading off work time for recreation time rather than vice versa	Almost three month Working efficiently Good time planning and commitment
Focus of experience:	Some extend of vacation centrism Also personal and academic self-development	Some intentions to ‘help’. Comments about ‘making a difference’ in students’ online profiles

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altruistic v. self-interest	Mostly desire to have a nice/unique experience	Somewhat relevant for altruistic self-development with one participant
Skills/Qualifications of participants	Low engagement with preparatory courses Low active evaluation of experiences or desire for deeper understanding	A broad skill set, with qualifications suitable for the project
Active/Passive participation	Largely passive choice of project or even Minor itself Largely Passive in providing solutions when issues arose in the organisation	Active decision to pivot from original project design
Level of local contribution	Significant amount of expert input, yet little influence on decision making for alternative project Low stake in future of local community No serious interest in impact evaluation	Significant amount of Market research. Successful decision making based on local expert input (original project)

5. Towards a framework for designing academic volunteerism to promote deeply engaged students

On the basis of the dynamic interactions between the Module Coordinator and the student behaviour, mediated through the course design, it is possible to identify six factors that appear to be significant in determining the depth of student behaviour, which we argue is antecedent to positive project impact (see Table 4). The first was the ‘mission’ of the course activity and design in terms of how well specified the requirement was that the purpose of the course was to make a difference. In our case, this foundation came from its roots in entrepreneurial education, in an approach which seeks to equip students to make a difference by understanding how to identify opportunities, positively decide to make a difference, develop and implement a plan towards change. The other element of this is the extent to which the module permits the realisation of the mission, because a number of the elements intended to drive the entrepreneurial approach were forced to the periphery of the module because of the complexity of undertaking a placement in the global south.

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The second and third factors relate to the selection of the students, both direct and indirectly. Indirect selection occurs in the students that consider the module, and that is affected by the reputation of the course. In already established modules, student are able to find out what the real requirements of the module area, where emphasis lies and which course elements are essential and which elective. A reputation for stringency and setting high standards is therefore likely to attract students more closely aligned with the aims of the course, in this case for depth of engagement. The second element is the direct selection of the students through the use of the motivation letter and on the basis of grades. The grades criterion was not a good selection, and the motivation letter had a degree of difficult in distinguishing between students who merely claimed a desire to make a contribution, and those with an orientation to altruism.

The final set of elements related to the project based elements. Where the preparation activities most strongly corresponded to what the students were being assessed on, then the students took them more seriously; it was an issue that this issue of practical entrepreneurship, whilst being foregrounded in the module, became peripheral because of difficulties in assessing it. A second element here was the selection of pros by the Module coordinator, and in particular in selecting local hosts able to work well with the students; ironically in this case the hosts appeared almost too expert for the students who were slightly overwhelmed by the pressure to codetermine the project. Finally, the risk mitigation capacities in the project were important, because every time an unexpected situation created a project crisis, it forced the students to concentrate on the primary task of delivering their learning objectives, relegating the importance of the project. Risk mitigation measures ensured the Module Coordinator and local hosts had a capacity to keep the students working towards an impactful outcome. These are summarised in the Table 4 below.

Table 4 – Academic volunteerism design factors promoting local contributions.

	High Impact	Intermediate Impact	Low/Negative Impact
Mission	Knowledge diffusion AND Promotion of sustainability AND Capacity Building in host and student Strong philosophy	Knowledge diffusion AND/OR Promotion of sustainability AND/OR Capacity Building in host and student Some trade-off of impact	No serious Mission Strong student centrisism
Minor Reputation	‘Excellence and High Impact’	‘Making a difference’	‘Nice experience’

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Selection	Tough selection of students Strong Minor-Host relationships	Some selection Some relationships	No selection No relationships
Preparation	Strong connection between theory and excursions	Some connection between theory and excursions	No connection between theory and excursions
Supervisors	Strong commitment to projects Proactive supervision Have relevant expertise	Medium commitment Active supervision Have some expertise	Low commitment Passive supervision Have no expertise
Risk Mitigation	Strong representation of local interests in programme Deep evaluation of experience Proactive risk mitigation	Medium representation of local interest in programme Evaluation of experience Reactive risk mitigation	No representation of local interests in programme No evaluation of experience Risk negligence

Academic volunteerism depends for its sustainability for both the hosting community and the student, while not becoming another form of tourism based mainly on the ‘commodification of at least partly altruistic intent’ (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 127). In this context, the framework proposed above is a potential tool to help improve the orientation of programmes to stimulate students to make a deeper contribution, or if that is not the desired aim, to place more emphasis on the individual learning and development activities.

6. Concluding Discussion

The case study demonstrates the extent to which international volunteering frameworks provide a means to understand how student placements in the global south can contribute to wider processes of local development, and ultimately to capacity building and the delivery of sustainable development goals. This is particularly important in the context of rising expectations to contribute to processes of global development; all too often the emphasis here is reduced to unilaterally providing advanced knowledge and research skills for these places rather than contributing to locally-situated collective learning activities in which universities contribute to local developments as equal, not superior, partners. The Student Volunteering Minor was able to impel the students to have at least a limited impact, via a wise choice in project partners, good supervision, good preparation & evaluation, and smart application of assignments.

In terms of practical applications of the research, the outcome of this research was expected to contribute to better understanding the conceptualization and design of AMV

programmes, thus bearing important implications for universities that are planning start this kind of international volunteerism programmes. We have proposed a framework for stimulating the creation of impact by academic volunteerism activities. There are a variety of users that may find this framework useful; academics who are running such programmes can use it to evaluate them, or to assist with the design of new volunteerism modules. Hosts may use it to estimate the value of the benefits they will get with reference to the way the programme is organised and their freedom to co-determine activities. The framework is also potentially of interest to students considering academic volunteerism to gauge the extent to which the course fits with their expectations, their own levels of altruism and their desire for personal advancement.

The use of the international volunteerism framework allows one to critically assess the nature of academic volunteerism programmes much like any other form of international volunteerism (Sin, 2009). A thorough collaboration between the volunteering programmes, host communities, and volunteer students is necessary if meaningful social change is to be achieved. In this context, the role of social capital in allowing communities to take advantage of economic, community-building, and capacity-enhancement opportunities is vital (Zahra & McGehee, 2013). Additionally, as underlined by Hammersley (2014), if short-term placements are to foster meaningful participatory action based on solidarity, mutual learning and relationship-building, the academic minor volunteer program should be well designed bringing a pedagogical and developmental perspective to its practice in order to contribute to sustainable development.

We acknowledge that this is an exploratory and tentative piece of research, and therefore must remain modest in drawing too many conclusions. Nevertheless, we are struck by the roles for universities and communities that this highlights, and the important of equivalence between the university and the community around the delivery of a common shared learning project, a learning project in which each partner (student and community) has their own individual urgent need in fulfilling. In understanding how universities can contribute more to societal development outside licenses, patents and spin-off companies, we therefore argue more attention need be paid to the role of student as a knowledge vector. Conceivably, the main contribution of this paper to the literature is its emphasis on proposing a parsimonious but important set of factors that help to understand the impact of academic volunteerism programmes that are most useful and important to the success and sustainability of academic volunteerism. Combining volunteering with international travel, cultural exchange and learning

objectives, academic volunteerism can educate volunteer students and build relationships of understanding between diverse people and places (Hammersley, 2014).

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A conceptual framework to understand academic student volunteerism

The Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) is a research institute (WHW, Article 9.20) located in the Faculty of Behavioural and Management Sciences within the University of Twente, a public university established by the Dutch government in 1961. CHEPS is a specialized higher education policy centre that combines basic and applied research with education, training and consultancy activities.

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- ⁱ One of the issues stimulating our research was our prior experience with a student volunteering cohort that there was indeed a tendency amongst students to treat the placement as either a holiday or a serious duty.
- ⁱⁱ the 'Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Participant Observation' (SSH REB, 2005) were followed as the framework for the fieldwork, and particular care was taken prior to the research visit to emphasise the importance of these ethical considerations.