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University Student Volunteering (USV): Instruments for Its Comprehensive Diagnosis (ICD-USV)

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Abstract

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Keywords

community service, evaluative case study, university quality, volunteer students, university student volunteering

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University Student Volunteering (USV) requires attention to guarantee its pedagogic quality and its fulfilment of community service. However, a review of the literature reveals a lack of tools for assessing the quality of USV. Thus, our research question was: how can we evaluate the efficacy of volunteer programs in higher education? This article follows a qualitative methodology through an evaluative case study of the creation of a set of instruments for the comprehensive diagnostic of USV (ICD-USV) with a 360° perspective, which provide feedback and feedforward for the development of USV, thus offering indicators of its quality. The application of the ICD-USV at a Spanish university and the participation of one volunteer student, five participating entities' technicians and two USV unit managers allowed for the identification of new analysis criteria for the adequate management of a USV program. Measures that could be used to guarantee the quality of basic, pedagogic, logistic and processual criteria, and to address the proposals and difficulties detected, are suggested.

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Introduction

The progressive convergence of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has promoted the re-training of European university degree holders, with the aim that they become professional workers who adequately integrate their professional practice and the exercise of social responsibility (González & Wagenaar, 2003). Thus, the variety of students' actions should be taken into consideration, by providing the students with the possibility of taking individual and participatory actions, and getting to know and discussing the ways in which they can contribute to the creation of an equal society (Vesterinen, Tolppanen, & Aksela, 2016).

Therefore, the professional preparation, ethical and civil training of the university students have become factors of quality in Higher Education. The university's commitment to the teaching and training of civil values and competencies takes on different forms and uses different channels (Rodríguez & Castaño, 2012). Volunteering is one of these forms, and its value, as well as the role of the University in its management, have been developed and become the objects of research studies.

Volunteering is understood to be a potential space for the construction of citizenship that complements its more instrumental aspect, which is focused on the performing of tasks, with a perspective of personal and social transformation processes (Arias, Boni, Ortega, & Rosado, 2015). "The development of global outcomes, including global citizenship and active civic responsibility, permeates the ideology of volunteering, as volunteering offers an attractive way for students to build their social and personal capital" (Einfeld & Collins, 2008, quoted in McFadden & Smeaton, 2017, p. 1).

This type of volunteerism is in accordance with the current laws, due to its advocacy of thinking-based, transformative and life-changing processes that contributes global-minded citizens (Arias et al., 2015), favoring the development of knowledge, abilities and values (Boni, López, & Barahona, 2013).

Universities have added volunteer services so that students can participate in programs that generally take place in the nearest community or specialized foundations to promote acts of solidarity. "Universities have at their disposal the people, the opportunity to offer training and support by highly qualified professionals, and the capacity to provide official accreditation to training" (Nieto et al., 2015, p. 153). Ultimately, these are privileged environments for managing volunteering activities that are directed towards the improvement of social, personal and economic capital of a community, host entities and volunteer students.

Therefore, the University is recognized as an agent that promotes volunteer programs, and the challenges that are entailed by this transforming approach in this context comes with an active commitment with quality in training and a responsible citizenry. This commitment requires an analysis of the fundamental principles and the methodology that can be used as the basis for the management of the university students' volunteering activities.

Student volunteering, within the Higher Education institutions (from here on, university student volunteering, USV), is characterized by its intellectual dimension, which establishes strong links between the curriculum and the volunteer experiences with the aim that these may lead to tangible learning and the promotion of awareness of social inequalities (Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010).

A review of the research studies focused on the analysis of the impact of USV demonstrates the relationships between personal development and learning (Cabrera-Darias & Marrero-Quevedo, 2015; Hollingsworth, 2015; MacNeela & Gannon, 2014; McFadden & Smeaton, 2017; Williamson, Wildbur, Bell, Tanner, & Matthews, 2017), social responsibility (Canney & Bielefeldt, 2015; Cheung, Lo, & Liu, 2015; Whitley & Yoder, 2015), and even employability (Baek & Cho, 2018; Cheung & Liu, 2017) of the student-volunteers.

These previous studies highlight the importance of the appropriate management and administration of the USV by the host entity, the student, and their relationships with the university, as well as the need to inquire about the impact of USV with respect to the service recipients, university agents and hosts. The question of how to fully include those involved to guarantee that diverse learning opportunities are offered through UV experiences, is a priority for researchers, university educators and associated organizations.

However, the perspective of the users of the services offered (e.g., Nieto et al., 2015), as well as those responsible of the USV activities at the university and/or host institutions (e.g., Paull et al., 2017) have only been considered in very few studies. Thus, a scarcity has been detected of adequate measures (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2014; Maine Commission for Community Service, 2008; Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2003) for performing a holistic evaluation of the USV processes, with a 360° perspective, that can provide feedback and feedforward geared towards the creation of measures for the optimization of the USV programs.

At the same time, there is a marked academic consensus that points to the need to be observant of the quality criteria so that the service learning (SL) experiences have the expected impact on the community and the students (Jenkins & Sheehey, 2012; Tapia, 2008). Along this line, the seven elements of high-quality SL, developed by the Service Learning 2000 Center (1996) at Stanford University, have become a guide for the design of the transition from an institutionalized volunteering program to a program that, considering the principles of SL, guarantees the accreditation of the learning conducted, at the same time offering a high quality service to society.

Once the role and the possibilities of the USV have been identified, its quality should be evaluated, just as it has been done with the rest of the training strategies at the university. Its state and its possibilities for improvement should also be calibrated to guarantee its effectiveness for meeting its proposed objective.

In this sense, the lack of instruments results in that only the evidence provided by the SL and its instruments, rubrics or verification lists is utilized, as this evidence collects information that allows for the optimization of proposals, establishing realistic and contextualized improvement plans (Rubio, Puig, Martín, & Palos, 2015). From the review conducted, the verification list by Jenkins and Sheebey (2012) was underlined, as it focused on Higher Education, and the rubric by Rubio et al., as well, due to the opportunity it offered for the gradual evaluation of different indicators, which eases the comprehension and design of the improvement of SL projects.

Thus, our research question is: How can we evaluate the efficacy of volunteer programs in higher education? To answer this question, we propose the creation of a set of instruments for the comprehensive diagnostic of USV (ICD_USV) with a 360° perspective (using all the agents involved in the USV), that will provide feedback and feedforward for the development of the USV, and will offer indicators of its quality as well.

Through this study, we have responded to a local need, the evaluation of the quality of the USV of a particular university, as well as to a global one, by contributing qualitative evaluation tools that are sensitive to the characteristics of each USV, to the field of knowledge.

The unit of management of our university's USV contacted the first author of the present work to ask for advice about the assessment of students' learning through USV. Our first step was the creation of a team of experts on qualitative methodologies and on the evaluation and training of transversal skills through active technologies, such as the SL and volunteering, to be able to undertake an effective assessment of the USV opportunities.

The literature review on this topic, described above, denotes the global need for such tools. Thus, we believe that this study will be of interest to all those involved in the management of volunteering programs at different entities and universities. Even university students and users of USV services could benefit from the improvement in the quality of these programs.

Methodology

Methodological design

By contextualizing the use of qualitative methods, we now explain the general design utilized to conduct the study and the construction of the instruments. As pointed out by Guba and Lincoln (1982), the main objective of qualitative research is to understand the facts in depth. To develop a better understanding of the dynamics of a program, Pérez-Serrano (2001) suggests the case study design as the most effective alternative. In this sense, the research study is approached with an evaluative case study, considered by Guba and Lincoln (1981) as the most complete within the types of case studies. This is because it offers an in-depth, fundamental, holistic, and live description of reality, trying to precisely diagnose a specific program such as USV in our case, which will lead to better decision making for its improvement.

Participants

The main agents of the USV program participated in this qualitative study: host entities, the volunteer students and the USV management unit.

The selection of the entities that participated in the USV program was conducted by having in mind the following criteria in order to ensure the validity of their responses:

- 1. The number of general competencies contributed by the solidarity activities of these entities for the training of the volunteer students.
- 2. The themes/subjects addressed by the entity related to the attention to vulnerable collectives, cooperation for development and the environment.
- 3. The forecasting all the key elements of the USV by these entities (offer of solidarity activities, smooth relationships with the management unit of the USV program and with the volunteer students for easing their incorporation, training, monitoring and evaluation).

Of the 33 entities that participated in the program considered, only five were contacted for taking part of the study, as they fulfilled the criteria faithfully.

The participation of the volunteer students was managed through the USV management unit due to data protection legislation. Thus, all the volunteer students from the 2015-2016 academic year were invited, for a total of 13. From these, only one volunteer student contacted the researchers to participate in the study.

The third participating agent, the USV management unit, was comprised of the program's director and the technician. This unit had experience in USV management since its creation in the 2012-2013 academic year until the 2015-2016 academic year. Thus, a total of eight people collaborated in this study: one volunteer student, five technicians responsible for staff in the participating entities, and two USV unit managers.

Procedure

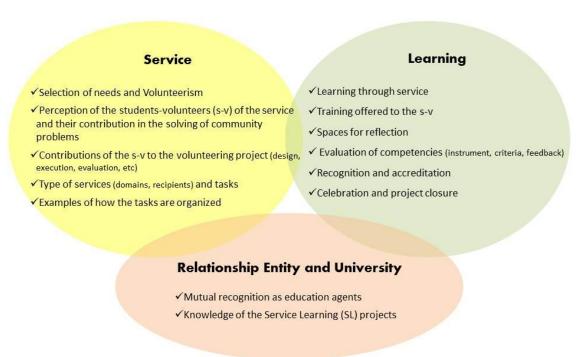
We can describe the main stages followed to conduct the study in general terms:

- 1. We presented the study project in the call for Teaching Innovation Projects from the UC, where it was accepted. Therefore, it received the approval from the ethics committee from the Humanities and Social Sciences Department (Area of Education) of this university. Thus, the design and development of this study contemplated measures to ensure ethical research practices to the protect participants' safety, privacy, and confidentiality.
- 2. We created a research team composed of experts on SL and university volunteering and on qualitative methodologies; a total of ten experts on the contents and the methods utilized worked cooperatively.
- 3. We reviewed the literature related to our research question, and decided to analyze the Rubric for the self-evaluation and improvement of SL projects (Rubio, Puig, Martín, & Palos, 2015) to create the evaluation instruments, as it catered to the experiences where service and learning activities belonging to university volunteering were combined.
- 4. For the construction of the matrix, we adopted and adapted the criteria of analysis or dynamism, structured as basic, pedagogic, and logistic, and the categories according to the levels of each dynamism. Thus, we utilized the four levels in which each dynamism could express their degree of pedagogic development, established by the Rubio et al. (2015) categories (see their definition in Appendix A). It is important to highlight, in words of the authors cited, that "the results obtained should not be reduced to a numerical score, each

- experience, dynamism and level implies a multiplicity of nuances, and this is where the richness of these types of projects lies" (p. 122).
- 5. Starting with the same criteria of analysis, we created the questions and the scheme of the semi-structured interviews for the three agents considered. The design of three semi-structured interviews was decided upon, as this technique allows for obtaining of a great richness of information (Fàbregues, Meneses, Rodríguez-Gómez, & Paré, 2016). In the process followed for the construction of the interview scripts, we considered the indications by Quintanal and Garcia (2012). In first place, in an exploratory phase, we reflected on the research question. In second place, in a preparation phase, we reviewed the existing literature on the subject matter and research question, and at the same time, we also reviewed the literature on the semi-structured interview as a qualitative research technique. In this phase, we designed the semi-structured interview scripts with questions that dealt with the dynamisms and categories considered in the matrix.
- 6. All the instruments, the interview scripts and the matrix of analysis, were evaluated by the 10 expert judges mentioned previously, until reaching their final version (see Appendices B, C, and D), to guarantee its suitability and its relevance.
- 7. In the sampling of the study participants, we considered the indications from Furco and Root (2010) for conducting research on SL ensuring "that the intervention under study qualifies as high-quality service learning" (p. 18). For this reason, the selection criteria (described in the participants section) considered the entities that contributed to the training of skills through quality activities. Likewise, the participation of all stakeholders in the process was deemed necessary to ensure the validity of the information collected.
- 8. During the interview, we shared the objective of the interview with the interviewees, and a visible scheme was shown into which they could place the questions in a more global manner (see Figure 1), according to the component referenced (service, learning or relationship between the entity and the university, which refer to the basic, pedagogic and logistic criteria, respectively), which was also reviewed by the expert judges. Also, we asked for permission to record, and they were offered the possibility of us sharing the results with them once the process ended. Two researchers from the expert team conducted the interviews promoting an open environment so that those interviewed were free to create a discourse.
- 9. Following Gibbs (2012), we performed a qualitative analysis of the interview content with complementary options such deduction and induction processes, as they allowed us to code the information collected by using the deductive matrix and locating emergent categories. This was done to prevent the data obtained from being obligatorily included in a previously-established category, making the diagnostic and optimization of the USV more flexible. To perform these analyses, the qualitative analysis program ATLAS-TI v 6.0 was utilized.
- 10. To ensure the quality of the research, as well as the validity and consistency of the results obtained, a double triangulation was performed according to Ruiz (2003). On the one hand, taking into account the heterogeneity of the informants and the point of view of the different groups that comprised the reality object of study, enabled us to triangulate the sources of data. On their part, the observation and the analysis of the data obtained by three participating researchers allowed us to allude to the triangulation of the researchers,

providing a greater robustness to the findings. Lastly, we verified the efficacy of the instruments designed, offering indicators related to their quality, when conducting a comprehensive diagnosis and providing feedback and feedforward of the development of the USV.

Figure 1
Scheme of the semi-structured interviews



Analysis of the Volunteering Programs at the UC within the SL framework: "an educational proposal that combines processes of learning and service to the community in a single, well-structured project in which the participants are trained by working with real needs of the environment with the aim of improving it" (Martin, Rubio, Batlle and Puig, 2010, p. 15)

Results

Firstly, the results of the content analysis of the information is presented, utilizing deductive categories (Appendix A). The triangulation of the information provided by the participants allowed us to identify the level of pedagogic development of each of the dynamism or analysis criteria of the USV. Therefore, this analysis is an essential part of the diagnosis of the USV, given that it provides information on the degree of pedagogic development achieved.

Secondly, we describe the emerging categories identified after the content analysis, which were beyond the grasp of the deductive categories matrix. These results demonstrate the power of the interview scripts created for collecting information of interest that also contribute with the evaluation and optimization of the USV. This is because we have also created their own categories or levels, which are important for the creation of a comprehensive diagnosis of the workings of the USV.

Lastly, in the discussion section, we provide feedback and feedforward for the development of USV starting with the results, of interest for this local study, as well as for others that share similarities in their degree of pedagogic development.

Comprehensive diagnosis: Triangulated profile of the level (category) in each dynamism (or criteria of analysis)

The results presented are organized in a manner that characterizes their grouping into basic, pedagogic, and logistic criteria. Following Rubio et al. (2015), "basic dynamisms refer to the central nucleus of service learning experiences, to their reason for being: social needs, service, their social meaning and learning" (p. 117); while "pedagogical dynamisms address the formative aspects that make up the service learning projects: participation, group work, reflection, recognition and evaluation" (p. 118) and, logistic criteria "the organizational and institutional aspects of service learning: partnership, consolidation in centers and entities" (p. 119).

We first tackled the analysis of each basic criterion: needs, service, sense or the impact of service and learning (see their definitions in Appendix A). As we discuss in detail below, most of them fall into a category that involves an intermediate degree of development (the definition of each category can also be observed in Appendix A). For the detection and analysis of needs and understanding of reality, it was established that the level of development corresponded with the needs shown (NedSHO), as the educators or entities were responsible for detecting and/or defining them. Thus, it would be two steps away from reaching its maximum development, which would imply the participation of the volunteer students in the identification of needs and/or social situations to which answers could be offered through acts of volunteering. Examples of this level of development are the following:

I doubt there is a process or written protocol, it depends on the demand. For example: all the projects from the work plan that were put into operation five years ago until now have been due to the great demand of unemployed individuals that came asking for help. NedSHO, Host entity

In this quote, the person responsible for university volunteering in an institution shares that the detection and selection of social needs they provide a response to is conducted by observing the demands of the service users, without mentioning the participation of the students in this analysis. While in the following quote, it is the USV unit director who states that in the selection of the proposals of service activities and the entities, they intuitively have in mind the characteristics valued by the students, but it is not mentioned that these appeared from the dialogue with university students.

We, at first, you could say that the idea was to have more diversity to offer more and so that it (the USV) was more attractive. Thinking about not only the students but the collaboration association as well. (NedSHO, USV unit)

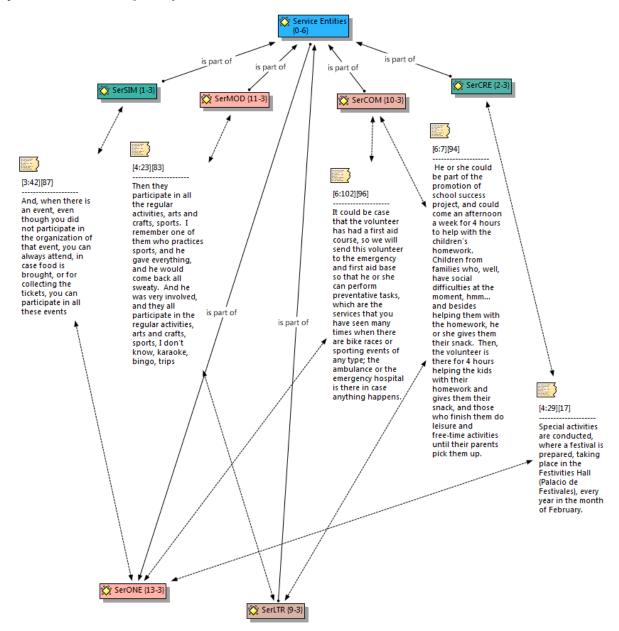
As for the evaluation of the services (i.e., activities conducted by the volunteer students), we detected examples that varied in their length, with some activities being more short-term (SerONE) and others more prolonged (SerLTR), as well as others that were more independent in their length, complexity, or involvement, being placed between moderate and complex (SerMOD and SerCOM), as they needed various competencies and entailed intellectual difficulty. Figure 2 shows an example of the citations provided by the host entities.

Within it, quotes are shown which demonstrate the existence of short-term tasks (SerONE) that vary in their complexity, from participation in events to cover low qualification posts, such as picking up tickets (SerSIM), to other more complex ones which even required prior training (SerCOM) or that needed some involvement for their design (SerCRE). The quotes that refer to tasks that are more prolonged (SerLTR) also differed in their complexity,

from the participation in leisure activities directed to a specific collective (SerMOD), to other more complex ones, due to the requirement of competencies needed for the training and care of underage children (SerCOM).

Figure 2

Examples of quotes expressed by the host institutions in each level of development (categories) from the criterion of analysis: service



The sensitivity to the impact of the service was placed within a level of civil impact (ImpCIV), in so far that the informants coincided when identifying their social dimension and the fact of having to answer to a need. However, a higher level would comprise the identification of its limitations as well, which have not been recognized by the interviewed informants. In the following example the volunteer student who is doing volunteer work with children from different backgrounds other than her own, recognizes that children have some unmet needs, and learns how to think of potential ways to meet those needs:

With the first-aid training course, you can see this idea, for example, I have had luck in life, and my education has been good, and my parents have been worried for me. However, with the children you are with, this is not always the case, and unfortunately, this situation exists, and you learn how to develop initiatives, to think how to remedy this situation. ImpCIV, volunteer student.

In the learning criteria, training linked to the service (LeaUSE) was detected, as the teaching-learning activities proposed by the host entities or the USV management unit were previously programmed, so that the volunteer students could carry out the services (see the quote below taken from a coordinator). The USV would be one-step away from reaching its full potential, which could be guaranteed if the volunteer students could also be involved in guided learning-research while performing the service.:

Basic and institutional training last four hours. The online training tends to be between 4 and 10 hours, because you have to spend more time with the exercises. This training is very particular, direct and specified for each area, and they are very basic. Starting with these, you have training that is more specific on how to use an automatic defibrillator, how to give a workshop on creating a Curriculum Vitae, psychological support in emergencies, classes that are specific to the activity you will conduct. LeaUSE, Host entity

Secondly, we address the analysis of each pedagogic dinamism: participation, group work, reflection, recognition, and evaluation (see their definitions in Appendix A). As we argue below, these dynamisms have an intermediate degree of development (see definition of each category in Appendix A).

The participation of the USV agents in the design, application and evaluation of the activity tended to be conducted jointly (ParSHR), although without arriving at shared leadership, which would entail reaching the highest degree of development in these criteria of analysis. Next, examples are presented taken from each of the agents involved in USV, which mirror the degree of development identified in this dynamism. We start with a quote from a technician responsible for the university volunteers in its entity.

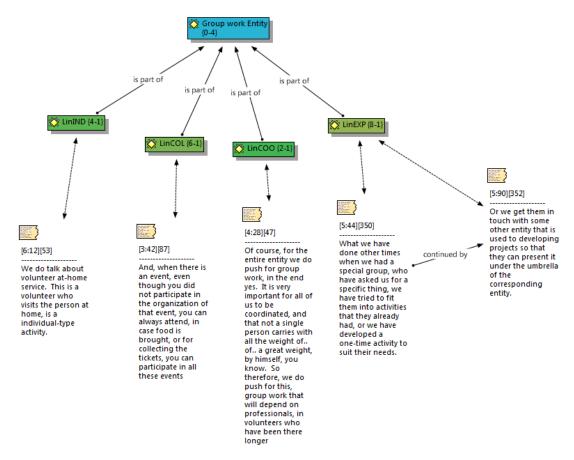
There was room there for the volunteer to lend a hand, even for preparing an activity, and once the volunteers are incorporated, we also like them to participate in the entire process, not only for them to accompany us, but also to evaluate how the entire process of each activity worked out. ParSHR, Host entity

The participating student volunteer also perceived that in specific areas there was an option of becoming involved along with other agents, in the design and development of the service: "In the area of youth, you have the option of being the leader of a project and manage it." (ParSHR, Volunteer student) And this was also observed by the USV management at the university: "For example, the entity always has specific evaluation classes starting with the volunteers, as they participate in everything" (ParSHR, USV unit).

The type of work performed as a group can be considered collaborative for the achievement of a common objective (LinCOL); also, the entities and the USV management unit worked in the creation of action networks, inviting other external agents to collaborate with them (LinEXP). Figure 3 shows some quotes of these criteria expressed by the host institutions, in which there was an unequal development according to each USV agent considered (see Appendix E). A quote is shown that mirrors the actions that did not require

programmed or collaborative help (LinIND), as well as other quotes which describe the collaboration to reach a common objective (LinCOL) or even an awareness of interdependence to reach common objectives with the volunteers who have been there longer (LinCOO). It also includes a quote that reflects the opening of the entities to collaborate with external agents, offering services or creating networks (LinEXP), actions that have not been observed by the volunteer student (see Appendix E).

Figure 3Examples of quotes expressed by the host institutions in each level of development (categories) from the criterion of analysis: group work



As for the reflection processes, generally a time allocated to them was scheduled, separated from the activities, and they were usually carried out at specific times throughout the length of the program (RefONE and RefCON). An example of the RefONE development category is shown below using the words of the USV unit director, as she recognizes that an amount of time is offered to discuss on different topics of the program with entities and students.

It depends, for example, when they [entities that participated in the program] spoke about dissemination aspects, [...], we always asked them how we could do things better. Or, for example, or if there was some activity that at first we thought did not fit with what the organization had told us, we asked the organization as well as them [volunteers], why this activity had been introduced. Everything was always very informal. RefONE, USV management unit

The following quote is considered an example of the RefCON category since the described reflection process takes place during the service to facilitate the analysis of the lived experience and to acquire knowledge.

Yes, in the preventive services we spoke before and after. Before to tell us what was going to happen, [...], and then we would meet to say we have done this, this happened, we have to improve this in some way, I've seen you OK here, there is always a great amount of teamwork. RefCON, Volunteer student

Examples of productive thoughts (RefPRO), thoughts that imply a contribution or diffusion of the service provided or the USV itself, were not always mentioned, which would entail a higher level of development of these criteria of analysis.

The recognition of the work conducted by the USV was only provided by the entities and the USV management unit, and it was usually conducted by granting certificates or recognition of credits (RecINT), which evidenced a low level of development of these criteria, as there was no participation by other agents. This recognition was usually linked with evaluation, as the identification of the competencies learned for the service was specified in the certificates and the recognition of credits. Thus, the evaluation tended to be competency-based (EvaCOM), through rudimentary rubrics that the student was not able to see. The participation of the student in the process of evaluation could entail reaching a higher level in these criteria of analysis. Examples of the category related to the recognition through university credits was provided by the Host Entity, with statements such as: "In addition, we have a volunteer ID card. Anyone who has participated in at least five activities of environmental volunteering has the right to ask for a volunteer ID card" (RecINT, Host entity). Also, as an example of the competency-based type of evaluation, we quote a statement from a technician who pointed out how the USV unit gives them a rubric to assess student learning: "Yes, they give us a form to evaluate the different abilities and competencies that they acquire when they are with us" (EvaCOM, Host entity).

While the next quote is an example of how both elements are combined: "Besides the certificate of credit recognition, a certificate of achievement was also given, in which the organizations listed the competencies that the person improved upon according to the type of tasks conducted" (RecINT and EvaCOM, USV unit).

As for the logistic dynamisms (partnership or coordination between the host institution and the unit of management of the USV; and the degree of consolidation of the USV), we have identified, on the one hand, that the coordination between the entities and the USV management unit was agreed upon (CoorAGR) with information such as: "We had an agreement with the management unit of the USV, they advertised our activities, our acts, and those who were interested in taking part got in touch through them" (CoorAGR, Host entity). Thus, there were agreements that established the characteristics of the relationship and the processes to be followed in the USV, and the responsibility of the design of the proposed activities fell on the host entities. Also, there were steps detected that aimed at achieving joint coordination, in the sense that the entities collaborated in the development of some projects from start to finish (CoorCONST), as shown by the following quote:

Projects were organized in December, for example, the project with the volunteer platform, the classes, and the MOOC projects to search for collaborators. Then the project was presented to all the organizations, and then, whoever wanted to participate, participated. Six or seven participated in the volunteering course, or they alternated. CoorCONST, USV unit

None of the coordination types identified by the host entity and USV unit were perceived by the volunteer student interviewed. On the other hand, a certain lack of knowledge by all the agents was identified related to SL-based pedagogy within the context of higher education (SLHEIGN), although there was also an opening towards it; as the solidarity entities (SLEntREC and SLEntEME) conducted SL experiences with other non-university educational levels. Therefore, in this dynamism we found that although there was a certain degree of development at the level of coordination between the host entities studied and the USV management unit, it was still in the early stages for guaranteeing SL-based pedagogy within the USV. The following quote shows how the USV unit perceives initial conditions for SL projects to flourish:

One of our tasks is to establish initial contact with social organizations so that it was evident that some social organizations worked very well, and that they had very important projects, very professional staff, and that this small link was sometimes used to get rid of the lack of confidence, and starting from this, something else emerged. SLHEEME, USV unit

In another quote a technician recognizes some elements that have been working within volunteer programs, as well as the conditions that bring them closer to SL projects and to collaborate with the university in the training of volunteer students.

I think the SL has always been used, but what is happening now is that is has been named. [...] Now with the change of the law, the learning that you have acquired while volunteering is made official, due to the competencies, here we have our 19 competencies, the competencies that each project has, the basic ones that we have to have, and the more specific ones that are later acquired. So yes, we were already working in that way. SLEntEME, Host entity

Appendix E numerically shows the representation of each level of development identified in the analysis criteria utilized to comprehensively diagnose the USV using the ICD-USV.

Emerging categories for the evaluation of the quality of the USV

The analysis of the information provided by the agents interviewed also allowed for the identification of three new dynamisms, with their own categories or levels, which are important for the comprehensive diagnosis of the workings of the USV.

- 1. The process-based dynamism is comprised of different criteria of analysis, such as incorporation, monitoring, satisfaction and motivations, which are key elements for the functioning of the USV activities. The incorporation of USV comprises different levels as a function of the actions by the USV management unit and the host entity directed towards guaranteeing socialization, adaptation and satisfaction of the USV volunteer student and the entity. Within these criteria, the following sequential levels are included:
- Routine incorporation (IncROU) implies a welcome and presentation of the entity and the USV (with a total number of citations (TNC) = 12 -times that this concept was mentioned in all of the interviews-).

- Flexible incorporation (IncFLEX) comprises the knowledge of the interests of volunteer students and the presentation of the entity's volunteer activities, with the intent of adjusting between interests and activities (TNC = 12).
- Progressive incorporation (IncPROG) implies the enabling of changes and adaptations to the circumstances (of volunteer students or the entity) throughout the volunteering time (TNC = 8). It can be considered the most developed level in this dynamism. A technician explains this kind of incorporation process as follows:

They [volunteer students] have a first interview with me. I tell them what activities they can develop in the organization. We also talk about what their interests are... And, they are left with the possibility of participating in most activities, that is, they do not necessarily commit already to one of the teams, but try and know a little about how we work here... after a month we talk again to see what they think, if it's the place they want to be at and then we formalize the relationship of engagement. IncPROG, Host entity

As for the monitoring, it is only comprised of one level. This implies the expression of information relative to the existence of tracking the participation of the volunteer student in the USV activity (TNC = 25). In the case of satisfaction, its presence implies the detection of expressions of well-being due to the participation in the USV activity (TNC = 31). Just as with motivation, well-being corresponds to expressions related to the reasons why the volunteer students participated in the USV activity (TNC = 19).

- 2. The dynamism indicated proposals for a high-quality USV activity that guarantees learning as well as significant service, and comprises the following categories as a function of their content:
- Flexibility of time (PropFLEX): proposals such as timetable flexibility with the intention of reducing the perception of work overload or the impossibility of participation (TNC = 5).
- Information (PropINF): measures that indicate the improvement of the information on the USV activity, as for its quality, quantity or dissemination media (TNC = 13).
- Evaluation according to competencies (PropEVA): implies awareness of the need to optimize this process with the involvement of the USV volunteer student (TNC = 4).
- Closure or celebration of the project and the volunteer students' service (PropCELE): as this is not done due to various reasons (TNC = 3).
- Culture of participation (PropCUL): measures destined at promoting the participation within the university and society in general (TNC = 18).
- Collaboration between the entity and the university (PropCOLL): taking into account the need and the importance of jointly collaborating more in volunteer projects or others (TNC = 10).
- Support (PropSUP): this proposal includes the need to count with support of a different type, recognizing the financing, structure, training needs, etc. (TNC = 6).

The development of a culture of participation was the most mentioned proposal to achieve a high quality USV. In fact, it was common for participants to accompany this proposal

with the perception of a widespread lack of preparation to participate, as one technician explains in the following quote:

There are many factors that affect the lack of participation. I believe that there is a lack of tradition both in who proposes participation, which is, our case, and on the other hand, the part that participates, citizenship. There is no culture of participation... It's changing but little by little... This requires a very long process and costs a lot. We believe in the issue of participation. In fact, we work on it and it costs a lot. PropCUL, Host entity

- 3. Lastly, the dynamism names difficulties in the development and participation in the USV presented, where the different categories, as a function of the content, are shown:
- Lack of time (DifTIME) or the problems of incompatibility with timetables (TNC = 36).
- Legality (DifLEG) related to the blurred limits between volunteering and professional work, and its implications in the management of the USV (TNC = 35).
- Interpersonal variability (DifVAR): as for availability, start of volunteering service, attitudes, involvement, learning...of the volunteer students (TNC = 13).
- Change of direction and/or management (DifCHAN) of the USV, which implies new priorities in the relationships between the host entity and the USV management unit, and the process of adaptation that it entails (TNC = 9).

The difficulties related to legality that were related to the meaning of volunteering for each participant involved were commonly mentioned, as well as their understanding of the regulations governing this activity, as the USV unit director stated:

You are not supposed to give anything in return to the volunteer, are you? It is an altruistic activity and what the Decree establishes is that you do a credit recognition; so you're giving something in return and there were organizations that didn't want to participate because of it. DifLEG, USV unit

Discussion

Through the use of an evaluative case, we verified the usefulness of the ICD-USV created for the identification of the state of development of a USV activity, at first considering the SL dynamisms established in the Rubric by Rubio et al. (2013) and the collaboration of each of the groups involved in the USV activity (host entities, volunteer students and USV management unit).

Unexpectedly, the application of the instruments allowed us to identify new dynamisms of interest for the adequate management of the USV that were not present in the original rubric. This was possible thanks to the open character of the instrument created, which enabled us to obtain information for calibrating and optimizing the quality of the USV. More specifically, the processual dynamism, which included key elements for the functioning of the USV, such as the attention to the incorporation, the monitoring, the satisfaction and the motivations; and lastly, the proposals and difficulties dynamism that contributed with the acquisition of feedback of interest by all those involved in order to guarantee the high-quality management of the USV.

Aside from what has been pointed out, we believe that the ICD_USV contributed with the tools needed for the comprehensive diagnosis of any USV, as they provided scripts and support for interviewing each agent involved in the USV (a 360° perspective) as well as the categories for the analysis of the information obtained, all of which considered a matrix that guaranteed the acquisition of data of each criteria of analysis.

The comprehensive diagnosis conducted through the ICD_USV also offered feedback and feedforward for proposing measures for the optimization of the design of the USV activity analyzed, tending to the higher levels of their criteria of analysis (Appendix A). Thus, for the improvement of the basic dynamisms, the joint identification of needs was deemed necessary, granting a voice to the entity's users and volunteer students, as well as having meetings with the entities to observe if answers could be found within the USV activities themselves. Also, it was important to focus on the optimization of the training by considering different strategies such as: (a) the detection of training needs through a permanent online poll in the USV activity's website; (b) the creation of forums so that the volunteer students, along with tutors, provide guidance through their experience; (c) mentoring programs for volunteer students between veterans and new volunteers; and (d) training of the staff, entities and students based on the SL pedagogy.

If we examine the pedagogic dynamisms, the design of a training-related evaluation shared between the USV agents is recommended, through the use of general competencies that contribute to training. In addition, it seems relevant to favor mechanisms of social and academic recognition, with the creation of some type of recognition for the volunteer projects and the promotion of meetings and open debate events, where the three agents involved in the USV and guests from other universities can partake on. Another element for the optimization of the USV is the planning of joint activities for reflection, between those responsible of the volunteering program, users, and volunteers, on the volunteering process and how to improve this experience. In these sessions, the attendees could also suggest new initiatives and joint actions of dissemination and sensitizing, training and/or research on volunteering, contributing to improving its quality at the University.

As for the logistics dynamisms, there is a need to invest in efforts for attaining greater dissemination and opening of the USV and the SL pedagogy to the whole of society and the education community; as well as to broaden the relationship between the University and the solidarity entities.

Lastly, with respect to process-related elements, the annual comprehensive diagnostic test of the USV with the ICD_USV and the participation of all the agents involved in the USV is considered essential, to monitor the measurements that were implemented and to detect other needs. In addition, the urgency of building a common website was found, to offer information, training, dissemination and recognition, with an intranet for students and entities.

In conclusion, the measures proposed try to grant a greater role to the volunteer students for the detection of needs and the improvement of processes of training, reflection, and evaluation, as well as the favoring of dissemination of the USV between the university community and society. In this sense, we were surprised to observe that the degree of development achieved by some dynamisms (e.g., logistic) was not perceived by the participating student volunteer. We believe that the measures proposed for the quality of the USV will contribute to volunteering experiences that aim towards tangible learning and the promotion of social awareness between the participating university students and the university community, in general (Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010).

The potential of the ICD-USV for contributing to the optimum development of USV has been demonstrated not only with the diagnosis in the result section, but also here with this feedback and feedforward discussion

Thus, given the usefulness shown by the ICD_USV for the diagnosis and optimization of the UPV, and the need to evaluate the quality of training that is demanded in the EHEA, the validation of instruments from other Universities and entities is proposed as a future research line, to complement the present study and to enrich the instruments created, integrating the advances achieved.

Along this line of thought, we invite other researchers to overcome some of the limitations of our study, such as the limited participation of volunteer students and the lack of consideration of the users to evaluate the community service of the USV. More voices would provide a contribution by enriching the information obtained, as we would have available more information on the experiences and more student perceptions about being part of the volunteering program. In our case, the restriction of the sample size was because of the difficulty in contacting the students who participated in the USV in its last edition, due to the Data Protection Law and the deletion of their email addresses once they graduated. The perspectives of the users of the service performed by the volunteer students were not considered due to the difficulty in identifying specific individuals who benefitted by the student's volunteer work, due to the lack of better research means. Lastly, it should be pointed that the analysis was conducted by only utilizing entities from "model" host entities, as the study only counted with those organizations that were more involved in the USV and who better fitted the selection criteria set.

These limitations could be overcome by providing a voice to the agents immersed in the context object of study, such as the users of the USV services, at the same time broadening the sample of volunteer students, entity technicians and USV unit managers, to evaluate the program from the time they start their relationship, and in different moments in time during their development. Without a doubt, this could contribute with motivating their involvement from the start, guaranteeing the observation and attention to essential elements for the diagnosis and optimization of the USV. Having in mind these limitations, future applications of the ICD_USV could contribute to the amplification of their diagnosis as well as their usefulness potential for the re-design of the USV activities.

We understand that the qualitative instruments constructed, the interview scripts and matrix, could be generalizable. Thus, their use could be optimal for the evaluation of a USV program that seeks pedagogic quality and community service. Likewise, the guidelines for the improvement of the USV presented here would be plausible in contexts with similar diagnoses. Nevertheless, we recommend caution in the direct application of the instruments and guidelines, as they require the evaluation and adaptation by the local team of experts where its use is foreseen. Through the study of multiple cases and through the application of our instruments in similar contexts, generalizations could be established that allow expanding the results beyond the context studied (Garcia, Gonzalez, & Ballesteros, 2001).

Our research could be of interest to different stakeholders. For example, for conducting future research studies on this subject matter given the tools provided and the advice given to overcome our limitations. And it may also be interesting for those who are involved in the management and application of the USV program, with the objective of obtaining good investments in the quality of Higher Education through this education modality, which can benefit university students and community service users as well.

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Appendices

Appendix A. ICD_USV: Matrix, Categories and Codes

DYNAMISM: Criteria of analysis	Categories	Codes	
BASICS:	Needs ignored	NedIGN	
1. Needs	Needs shown by educators/entities.	NedSHO	
Entail lacks or difficulties found in present reality, and after they are detected, they invite actions that aim to improving the situation.	e e		
	Needs discovered by the students.	NedDIS	
2. Service	According to seasonal dedication:		
Tasks performed in an altruistic manner to respond to needs.	One-time service	SerONE	
-	Long-term service	SerLTR	
	According to complexity:	SerSIM	
	Simple service, simple, mechanical or routine tasks.	SerMOD	
	Moderate service : Easy-to-learn tasks that require a certain demand and involvement.	SerCOM SerCRE	
	Complex service: Tasks that require many competencies due to their difficulty.	Sercial	
	Creative service: Tasks that require design for problem resolution.		
3. Sense of service or Impact	Tangential, its social dimension is not perceived		
Positive repercussion on the needs, due to the social usefulness of the activity or to the civil consciousness shown by the protagonists.	Needed , answers to a need, its social dimension is not perceived.	ImpNEE ImpCIV	
	Civil : a need is answered and there is evidence of its social dimension.	ImpTRANS	
	Transforming : it satisfies a need, its impact is identified, as well as its limitations.		
4. Learning	Spontaneous, without being programmed.	LeaSPN	
Activities destined to the acquisition of learning.	Planned with the training, without a link with the service.	LeaPLA LeaUSE LeaRES	
	Useful, planned and related to the service.		
	Research: training that is guided through the service that implies conducting research whose aim is training and preparation for action (i.e. project-based work).		

PEDAGOGIC:

5. Participation

Involvement of the volunteers in an activity to contribute, together with other actors, to its design, application and evaluation. **Closed**, without having the possibility of introducing modifications.

ParCLO
ParDEL

Delimited or specific contributions required.

ParSHR

Shared in the design and joint development.

ParSPR

Spearheaded responsibility of the project and intervention in all the phases.

6. Group work or in conjunction (Link)

Interdependence between the participants directed towards the preparation and development of the tasks conducted.

Independent with possible non-programmed help.

LinIND

Collaborative, combining of tasks to reach a common objective.

LinCOL

Cooperative: interdependence to meet a common objective.

LinCOO LinEXP

Expansive. Creation of actions networks with the incorporation of other external agents.

7. Reflection

Programming of times and activities to facilitate reflection, meaning, the examining of the experience lived in order to give it sense and to gain new knowledge.

Diffuse, not expected, spontaneous.

RefDIF

One-time, programmed and separate from the activities.

RefONE

Continuous, programmed, conducted throughout the length of the project.

RefCON RefPRO

Productive, expected, continuous, entailing contribution or dissemination.

8. Recognition

Actions destined for communicating to the volunteers that they have correctly conducted their activity.

Casual, not expected, spontaneous evaluation of the participants.

RecCas

Intended, for example: the recognition of credits for University or the granting of certificates by the entity.

RecINT

Reciprocal, public display of the beneficiaries of the service and joint celebration

RecREC RecPUB

Public, recognition in communication media, prizes or exhibitions of the activities.

9. Evaluation

Definition of the plan of evaluation destined to the obtaining of information on the participant's performance and offering of feedback that could help them to improve. **Informal**, without an established evaluation plan, evaluations are spontaneously shown.

Intuitive, without criteria or indicators of the successful meeting of the general objectives that could be accredited.

EvaINF

EvaINT EvaCOM

EvaJOIN

Competency-based, with a plan of evaluation destined to the development of competencies and their accreditations.

Joint: joint intervention at different times when evaluating the competencies learned by the students.

LOGISTICS:	Unilateral, the project is designed unilaterally	CoorUNIL
10. Partnership or Coordination Collaboration between the	Directed , the educational entity plans, and the social	CoorDIR
entities (social and educational) oriented towards the joint creation	entity is limited to offering a space for providing the service.	CoorAGR
of activities.	Agreed , joint agreement of the project, designed by one of the entities.	CoorCONST
	Constructed , the project is designed and applied jointly.	
11. Consolidation in Higher	Ignored: the existence of the SL methodology is	SLHEIGN
Education The education entity knows about,	unknown Receptive : the SL methodology is known and/or open	SLHEREC
approves, integrates and strengthens a SL project.	minded towards its development and implementation. Emerging , it is known because a professor has been	SLHEEME
sucuguicus a SL project.	part of a SL experience.	SLHEINT
	Integrated , the education center drives the SL projects and performs the monitoring.	SLHEID
12. Consolidation in social	Identitarian , it is part of the center's culture. Ignored: the existence of the SL methodology is	SLEntIGN
entities The education enter knows,	unknown Receptive : the SL methodology is known and/or open	SLEntREC
approves, integrates and	minded towards its development and implementation.	SLEntEME
strengthens a SL project.	Emerging , it is known because a professor has been part of a SL experience or because some information	SLEntINT
	is available. Integrated, the SL is present in the activities program of the entity. Identitarian, the SL forms part of the entity's ideas.	SLEntID

Note: The description of the dynamisms and categories of analysis is based on the Rubric for the self-evaluation and improvement of SL projects from Rubio et al. (2015).

Appendix B. ICD_USV: Matrix and Interview Script for the Host Entities

DRIVES: Criteria	Interview scripts (Entities) Questions				
of analysis					
BASIC:					
1.Needs	How do you detect and select the Social Needs to which you propose services for and/or projects destined for volunteering? Is the sense of service developed addressed with the students-volunteers? If this is the case, explain how this is done.				
2.Service	What services do the students provide? To what domain does it correspond to? To whom is the service directed? Into what tasks is the service provided by the students-volunteers defined?				
3. Sense of the service or impact	What personal dedication (time, emotional, physical, attitudinal) is demanded from the students-volunteers by the service provided? In general, to what degree do you believe that the tasks conducted by the students contribute to providing an answer to the social needs and/or problems of the community?				
4. Learning	What kind of training is offered to the students-volunteers before and/or after the service? (How is it, who implements it, duration, content?				
PEDAGOGIC: 5. Participation	How is the incorporation of the students-volunteers conducted in your Volunteering Entity? To what degree do students-volunteers participate in the design, implementation and/or evaluation of the volunteer experiences?				
6. Group work or in conjunction	In the case that the student-volunteers work in a group : could you provide an example of what this group work consists of?				
7. Reflection	Are spaces or time dedicated to the student-volunteers so that they share their experiences? To what degree do you consider that these spaces contribute to reflecting about the project?				
8. Recognition	In what way is the participation in the project of the student-volunteer recognized? (i.e.: certification/services are offered) If some end-of-project activity or celebration of the project is conducted, could you explain how this is done?				
9. Evaluation	How is the evaluation of the students-volunteers conducted?				
LOGISTICS:					
10. Partnership or Coordination	What is your opinion on the coordination of your entity with the University, or as educational agents (management, formation, tutoring and evaluation of the students-volunteers)? Would you like this coordination to be extended to the creation of other projects?				
11. Consolidation in Higher Education.	The scheme of the interview is presented, pointing to the definition of SL, and the following is asked: To what degree do you believe that SL projects are being developed in Higher Education, related to your entity?				
12. Consolidation in Social Entities	What requisites or ingredients do you believe to be fundamental for creating a culture of SL in the volunteering entities? Would you like to add another comment that we have not asked and that you believe to be relevant to the subject matter?				

Appendix C. ICD_USV: Matrix and Interview Script for Volunteer Students

DRIVES: Criteria	Interview scripts (Student-volunteer)		
of analysis	Questions		
BASIC: 1.Needs	Why did you decide to volunteer and participate in your university's UVP?		
2.Service	What did the tasks conduced consist of?		
3.Sense of the service or impact	How do you evaluate your contribution? For example, in your opinion, to what social needs have you responded to through your participation in the UVP?		
4. Learning	Have you received some type of training before or during your volunteering time? If that was the case, what did it consist of? Was it useful?		
PEDAGOGIC: 5. Participation	How was your incorporation to the UVP? And to the entity? To what degree do you consider that you have participated in the creation, implementation and evaluation of the projects in the entity where you volunteered?		
6. Group work or in conjunction	If your volunteer work was conducted in a group , could you explain to us how you organized yourselves?		
7. Reflection	Have you had the time to reflect on the activities and your experiences? If yes, could you explain what it consisted of?		
8. Recognition	Was there some type of end-of-project celebration? If so, what did it consist of? Could you explain to us how the University recognized your contribution as a volunteer? And the Entity?		
9. Evaluation	As for the monitoring (and/or evaluation) of your participation in the Entity and the UVP: How was it conducted? Did you think it was adequate?		
LOGISTICS: 10. Partnership or Coordination	Would you repeat the experience? What would you improve? Would you recommend other students to participate in your university's UVP? Why? What benefits and limitations do you identify?		
11. Consolidation in Higher Education.	Have you heard about SL? The definition of SL is presented, and the following is asked: What SL experiences at your university are you aware of? Do you believe that it would be interesting to develop SL experiences at the University? What requisites or ingredients do you believe are fundamental for generating a culture of SL at University?		

 $\textbf{Appendix D. ICD_USV: Matrix and Interview Script for the Unit of Management of the USV }$

DRIVES: Criteria	Interview scripts (Unit of management UVP)				
of analysis	Questions				
BASIC:					
1. Needs	How are the entities through which the agreements and projects are offered for the UVP selected? Are studies or evaluations of Society's needs conducted or does it begin from a previous social diagnostic that allows for the identification of the priorities of intervention in the social reality within which the UVP is framed? Or are forums or other types of activities created that are directed to the students, and which are destined to the critical understanding of social realities and/or identification of their interests of collaboration?				
2.Service	What types of services do the students provide for the entities? To what users are they directed? Into what tasks are these services defined? Are they conducted individually or in a group? Can they count with any type of support from the entity or university? What type of personal dedication can they expect from these tasks?				
3.Sense of the service or impact	To what degree is the social dimension —value of the contribution to the community- of the services provided by the students for their proposal in the UVP evaluated? To what degree is it ensured that the students are conscientious of the social dimension of their contribution?				
4. Learning	What type of training and/or activities are offered to the students before and/or during the providing of services aimed at acquisition of learning?				
PEDAGOGIC: 5. Participation	What are they criteria used to consider that the projects or services are of interest for the UVP? For example, is it observed that these services involve the display of different competencies or that they require the participation of the student in the different phases of its execution (diagnosis of social-evaluation of needs, design-planning, execution, evaluation and [celebration-dissemination)?				
6. Group work or in conjunction	Were the activities conduced individually or as a group? Do you have some type of support from the entity or the university?				
7. Reflection	Are specific times and activities directed to favoring reflection of the students on their experiences programmed? At what specific times do these take place? What contents are discussed? Are these reflections taken into account? For example, are they shared within the university community, the entities or with the public?				
8. Recognition	How is the student's participation in the UVP recognized? When and who (entities, community and university representatives, etc.) participates in this recognition event?				
9. Evaluation	Could you describe to us the evaluation plan: instruments, moments in time, activities, participation by the entities and students, evaluation criteria? What actions are destined to offering feedback to the student throughout the process?				
LOGISTICS: 10. Partnership or Coordination	What is your opinion on the coordination between you and the participating entities? Could you point to the activities that make up this coordination?				
11. Consolidation in Higher Education.	The definition of SL from the interview scheme is previously presented, and the following is asked: to what degree do you believe that SL projects are consolidated in Higher Education? Do you believe that the educational community is interested and/or prepared? What do you think the fundamental requisites or ingredients are for creating a culture of SL at the University? And in the UVP at your university, would they have room for SL projects?				
12. Consolidation in Social Entities	And on the entities that collaborate in the Volunteer Programs at the UC, to what degree do you believe that SL projects are being consolidated? In this case, what requisites or ingredients do you believe to be fundamental for creating a culture of SL in these entities?				

Appendix E. Number of Citations Relative to Each Level of Development Identified in Each Criterion of Deductive Analysis According to Each USV Agent

Level of development	Student- volunteer	Unit of management of the UVP	Entities	Tota1
Basic drive:				
- Needs:				
NedSHO	2/2*	7/10	13/15	22/27
- Service				
SerONE	4/16	4/15	13/46	21/77
SerLTR.	2/16	4/15	9/46	15/77
SerMOD	1/16	3/15	11/46	15/77
SerCOM	9/16	4/15	10/46	23/77
- Sense of service or Impact				
ImpCIV	4/6	6/9	15/21	25/36
- Learning				
LeaUSE	6/6	14/16	14/21	34/43
Pedagogic drive:				
- Participation				
ParSHR.	1/3	3/6	13/22	17/31
- Link				
LinCOL	2/3	1/10	7/25	10/38
LinEXP	0/3	9/10	9/25	18/38
- Reflection	0/3	5/10	2,23	10/50
RefONE	0/2	13/16	6/17	19/35
RefCON	2/2	1/16	4/17	7/35
- Recognition	2/2	1/10	4/17	1133
RecINT	1/4	15/18	12/22	28/44
- Evaluation	1/4	13/16	12/22	20/44
EvaCOM	0/1	20/25	11/14	31/40
Logístics drive:	0/1	20/23	11/14	31/40
- Partnership				
CoorAGR	0/0	15/29	11/12	26/41
CoorCONST	0/0	12/29	1/12	13/41
- Consolidation SL	0/0	12/27	1/12	13/41
SLHEIGN	0.23	7/12	0/0	7/45
SLHEREC	0/2	7/13	0/0	7/15
SLHEEME	2/2	4/13	0/0	6/15
	0/2	2/13	0/0	2/15
SLEntIGN SLE-tREC	0/0	3/5	1/13	4/18
SLEntREC	0/0	0/5	7/13	7/18
SLEntEME	0/0	1/5	5/13	6/18

^{*} The results shown are, in first place, the number of citations that each category received and, in second place, the total number of citations that appeared in the criterion or dynamism of analysis to which it belongs.

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